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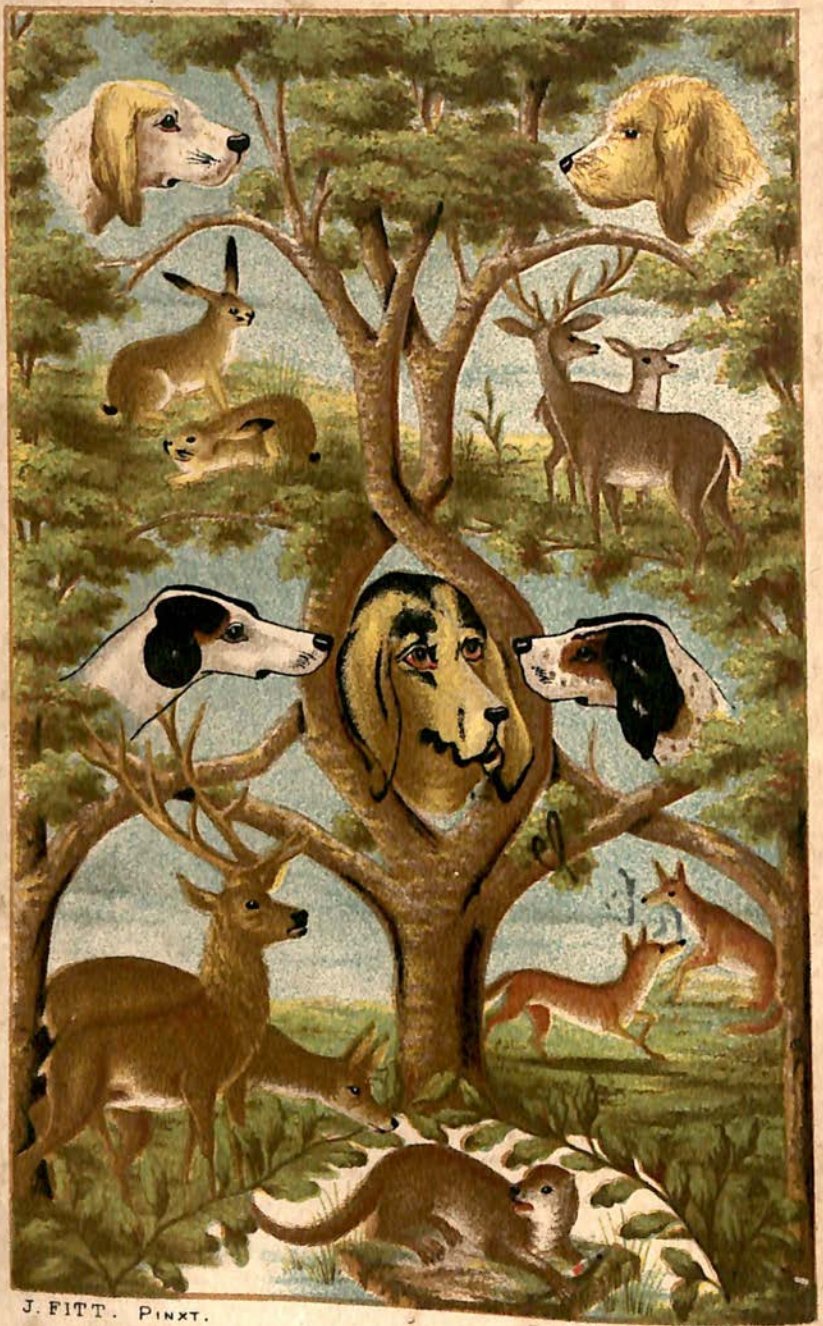

J. FITT. PINXT.

E. MEYERSTEIN LONDON, LITH.

COVERT-SIDE SKETCHES;

OR,

THOUGHTS ON HUNTING SUGGESTED BY MANY DAYS IN MANY COUNTRIES WITH FOX, DEER, AND HARE.

38672

BY

J. NEVILL FITT,

H. H. OF THE SPORTING GAZETTE.

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COVERT-SIDE SKETCHES.

CHAPTER I.

THE POPULARITY OF THE CHASE AT THE PRESENT TIME.

Hunting is the noblest exercise;
Makes men laborious, active, wise;
Brings health, and doth the spirits delight,
It helps the hearing and the sight;
It teacheth arts that never slip
The memory—good horsemanship,
Search, sharpness, courage, and defence,
And chaseth all ill habits thence.

On this subject there is little need for me to insist, though it is well worthy the notice, not only of the writer on sporting subjects, but also the students of English character, how strongly the passion for every kind of field sport has been developed within the last few years. It is worthy also the attention of reformers (so-called) and politicians whose aim is to bring about, either by persuasion or law, the abolition of those exciting pursuits to which Englishmen have been addicted from the earliest ages recorded in history until now. Whether by force of public opinion they wish to deter us nationally from the chase, or by the abolition of all laws protecting game to prevent the possibility of its being indulged in, they must first of all find some other outlet for those passions and instincts with which every denizen of these islands seems to be imbued by Nature—a love of sport, danger, and adventure, which takes us into all

climes, and leads us to face privations, perils, and hardships in its pursuit—which makes us chase the elk through the snows of Canada, and play cricket under a tropical sun—is not to be repressed or denied. The signs of this spirit are so plainly written that he who runs may read, and though other nations boast keen sportsmen, and first-rate horsemen and shots amongst them, in England alone does this innate love of the chase appear to pervade the whole community. Let a fox be viewed, or the sound of the horn heard in the neighbourhood of any village, and straightway every man, woman, and child will turn out to see all they can, though experience must have taught the greater portion of them that their view of the spectacle will at most be but a fleeting and transient one. Look at those men who, in many countries, run day after day and week after week with the hounds, earning a precarious livelihood by opening gates, catching horses, or leading home hounds that are lame and disabled. Look again at the enormous price of land in the present day, which now yields a very small percentage as an investment, and yet is as eagerly bought as ever. What is the cause of this? Perhaps not solely a love of sport, but I venture to say that in a very great measure it is so. Men make money rapidly in these days, and nearly all who can afford it will and do pursue the chase in some sort of fashion. The open spaces, where formerly they could indulge their inclination, are gone; in consequence, they buy a place of their own, or rent one at a great cost, to indulge their inclinations. Look also at the increased and increasing numbers which year after year meet hounds, and then answer the question whether the chase is not more popular now than at any time since England was a nation? The cause of this is, no doubt, increased wealth and increased facilities of locomotion. In former days, none but those who lived in the country could hunt or shoot regularly. The citizen was forced to put up with his day or two a week with the Old Surrey, and a little shooting occasionally when visiting a friend. Now he can, if so minded, have his grouse-manor in Scotland, and

his stud of hunters at Market Harborough, and yet find time to attend to an amount of business such as his predecessors never dreamt of. This spirit is not new; although dormant, it was as keen in our ancestors as ourselves, but the means for its development were wanting. The Londoner of old was forced to content himself with seeing a trotting-match, cock-fight, prize-fight, or ratting-match, not to mention an occasional bull-bait, most of which were very barbarous amusements, no doubt; but what was to be done—the thirst for excitement was there, and must in some manner be allayed. We live in happier times—the wealthier can hunt and shoot; for the man of smaller means there are fishing, cricket, and athletics. As a natural consequence, the old barbarous amusements have fallen into disrepute, and many of them are now contrary to law. But it is a fact worth bearing in mind that substitutes, and good ones, have been found for them. Let those who would civilize us out of hunting and shooting first consider where the pent-up energies that now find vent in them are to be turned, or results may happen on which they have little calculated.

Captain Shakespeare, in his "Wild Sports of India," says,—"Depend upon it that the deep-set eye, thin nostril, and arched brow are not to be baulked of excitement. The possessors of these—I may say *gifts*—live and are formed for excitement. If not satiated in one way, and that an innocent, manly, and useful one, your boys may take to the gaming-table, or to an excess of feasting, rioting, or debauchery. Excitement they must have or die. Let them, therefore, become bold riders, cunning hunters, riflemen of the woods. Inure them to toil while they are young, and a green old age shall reward them for their choice, and they shall be thankful to you for your encouragement and advice."

These words may justly be applied to nine out of every ten Englishmen, and they are worth weighty consideration. I must excuse myself for turning aside, as it were, a little from my legitimate subject, the present popularity of the chase, but of

late years powerful pens have been lifted up in its disparagement, and amongst a certain section of the community there has arisen a morbid tendency to decry sport as a relic of barbarism, unsuited to the refinement and civilization of the present age. Beneath such doctrines, while the English character remains as it ever has been and now is, there lurks a danger which, perchance, the promulgators of them would themselves be the last to detect. It is the love of sport which makes deer-stealers, and poachers; and I firmly believe that—thieves, drunkards, and blackguards, perhaps murderers, as they often end by becoming—nine out of ten of these men are at the commencement merely keen sportsmen, who have no way of indulging what is to them an appetite as natural as eating. Could their energies have been directed into a right channel, and they had become huntsmen, keepers, earth-stoppers, or found some employment of that sort, a very different fate may have awaited them.

Having briefly glanced at sport as it stands in public estimation in the present day, let me more particularly turn to the chase, as hunting is now termed, in contradiction to shooting or coursing. Be it understood that, in the present sketches of the sport, I by no means intend to tread on the domain of those masters of the art—Beckford, Nimrod, Delmè-Radcliffe, Scrutator, Stonehenge, and hosts of other writers—who have gone before, and instruct my readers in the art and mystery of hound-breeding and kennel management, or the breeding, breaking, and education of hunters. My endeavour in the following pages is to amuse rather than instruct; at the same time, by touching on points in connexion with hounds and hunting that have been passed over by most of the writers named, perchance as too trivial for their notice, but which have materially added to my own pleasure in the field, I hope, that to some of my readers, should they not already have made the same observations for themselves, the perusal of this may be the means of adding fresh pleasure in the pursuit. It is perhaps very heterodox to say so, but I think, with all our present love of the chase, the

large body of hunting men do not enter enough into the instincts of the animals they are pursuing, or those that aid them in that pursuit, to derive the full enjoyment which hunting is able to afford. They are too much occupied with themselves, their riding, and their horses, in the first place, and too jealous of their neighbours in the second, for this.

No man is a greater admirer of good and bold horsemanship than I am. It is a *sine quâ non* of the thorough enjoyment of hunting; but I maintain, and I think few can contradict it, that the man who studies the nature of the game pursued, and of the hound pursuing, very greatly enhances the pleasure of riding over a country. He has all the excitement of rapid motion, and overcoming a certain amount of danger by negotiating fences safely, enjoyed by him who goes out only to ride, with that derived from his knowledge of woodcraft, to use an old term, superadded. He sees a thousand beauties in the chase that are lost to the man who only rides to cut down his neighbours, and looks on the pack merely as the medium to be used in pointing out the path he is to go. It appears to me like a connoisseur of painting and a man of ordinary judgment looking at a fine work of art. The latter finds his eye gratified and his taste pleased by the object before him, but he misses that refinement of pleasure which a study and knowledge of the subject gives to the other, who sees and notes numerous subtleties and beauties of style and treatment which are lost on his companion, but which, given the same knowledge, he would be equally capable of discovering. Hence I would advise all men, for the sake of their own pleasure, when they hunt, to give, if I may be allowed the term, more mind to the matter in hand than appears the custom in the present day. They would enjoy their amusement with greater zest, they would do far less mischief, and be less hindrance to hounds, huntsman, and master. Our ancestors did this: they studied the habits of their game and of the hound they intended to hunt him with. Hence, as a rule, there was a greater average of good sportsmen amongst those who hunted then than in our

day. Perhaps men will say that now they have no time for that sort of thing; the elder generation devoted their lives to hunting, but they have something else to do. No doubt this is true, if they want to become perfect masters of the art—modernized Meynells—but I am recommending nothing of the sort. A few years of ordinary observation will give them all they want to know; but observation is a faculty few exercise in the matter of sport, or we should not see a man, owner of a large and very first-class stud of hunters—one who hunted nearly every day in the week—ride straight to the very point a master has left open for the fox to break covert, as I have seen done ere now.

In horsemanship there is no doubt but we excel our predecessors; many men ride now as well as a few did in old days, and, in my opinion, on far worse materials, though they have the advantage of having their horses in better condition. That the hunter is what he was even thirty years ago, taken as a class, I do not believe. On the other hand, fences, if not stronger, are far more numerous than they were, and if some of the land rides lighter from being drained, there is more plough to contend with, as well as increased crowds, crushing and jostling for the practicable places; so that, taking things all round, it is more difficult to ride well now than formerly, and the average of really scientific horsemen is, I am convinced, greater. This being admitted, as I believe it will be by all competent to form an opinion on the subject, one great step is taken towards those whose love of the chase is no less ardent than that of their forefathers, becoming something more than mere horsemen; in fact, as I said above, better sportsmen. With superior advantages for watching the work of hounds, in the capability of riding well up to them, it wants merely less jealousy of our fellows, and a truer appreciation of what the art of riding a chase should be, coupled with the observation, which the cessation of this system of turning the hunting-field into a race-course would allow ample time for, to give us a great increase in the number of men who really know what

hunting is. In fact, the fault now proceeds as much from want of thought in a lot of high-spirited young men, all eager to distinguish themselves in a run, as from any other cause. As Tom Hood says,—

> "But evil is wrought from want of thought
> As well as want of heart."

This I believe to be truly the case in the hunting-field.

Bold riding is a great desideratum in any nation, but, as I have somewhere read, though at the moment I cannot call the author of the passage to mind, "Bold riding should have an end and object, and the legitimate end is to enable the rider to see the work of hounds," or words to that effect. That all men cannot take this interest in an equal degree, I admit; there are some to whom cutting down a friend, or pounding a rival, is as the breath of their nostrils, and to do so, they would not only think the spoiling a run a small sacrifice, but the leaping on and maiming a hound or two a trivial affair. As I shall presently show, there is a description of chase in which such spirits can disport themselves to their heart's content; where they are in small danger of doing any serious damage to hounds, or spoiling the sport of, perhaps, a couple of hundred people, who having gone to great expense in the matter of horseflesh, subscriptions, hunting quarters, and so forth, are naturally prone to look with an unfavourable eye on the efforts of some half-dozen or half-score men, who selfishly wish to reap distinction at their expense. In fact racing, or to use the less expressive, though, perhaps, more proper term, riding against each other in the hunting-field is undoubtedly bad form. It is really no test of merit, as the weights and horses are generally very unequal; and in the present day, when steeple-chase meetings cover the face of the earth, at which horses can be matched and weights adjusted to a nicety, there is no excuse for turning the hunting-field from its legitimate

purpose. If men cannot ride without music there is still the drag for them.

Those who are too given to press hounds merely from a real love of them are sure to come back in time, and, when age and experience have somewhat cooled their ardour, and tempered their eagerness, often make our most brilliant sportsmen and horsemen. They, however, are different kind of men altogether from the other. One is, if I may so term it, a sportsman in embryo, the other, a horseman (often a very fine one), and nothing more; and, moreover, a man of such selfishness and vanity, that he cares not whose pleasure he interferes with so long as he can shine, too often only for a few brief minutes; for if scent is good, and hounds go on, he is often missing at the end of a run, though he may shine in a burst.

To return to the popularity of hunting, it is probable that very few of my readers have ever been present at what is termed an earth-stopper's dinner; that is, the entertainment given to the keepers, woodmen, and others, after accounts for stopping have been settled, and "finds" paid for. If they once attended one of these *réunions*, they would see that where the thing is well carried out, and the master of the hounds is on good terms with these people, as he must be to ensure sport in countries where heavy rents are not paid for the coverts, the popularity of hunting extends to much lower strata of society than is usually to be seen at the covert side. I may relate an anecdote which came within my own knowledge, which tends also to show the good that may be effected through meetings of this sort. The secretary of a certain hunt was employed paying the keepers for finds in their coverts, when a man (a small farmer as it proved) forced himself into the room, and in a surly manner presented a long bill for poultry, and said he should not go until it was paid. The secretary told him he was much engaged just at the moment, but if he would allow him he would put the bill into his pocket, and send him a check for the money; adding, "We shall have a dinner here

this afternoon, and, perhaps, you will do me the pleasure to stay and join us," a proposition he consented to in a surly sort of way. He, however, appeared to enjoy himself very much, and a few days afterwards, when his bill was paid, thanked the secretary for his entertainment, told him he was sorry he had behaved so rudely, and added, "As long as I am in this country I will never send in a poultry bill again." A vow which I have every reason to believe he kept.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE NATIONAL UTILITY OF HUNTING AS COMPARED WITH OTHER SPORTS.

"The first physicians by debauch were made,
Excess began, and sloth sustains the trade;
By chase our long-lived fathers earn'd their food
Toil strung their nerves and purified their blood;
But we their sons, a pamper'd race of men,
Are dwindled down to threescore years and ten.
Better to hunt in fields for health unbought
Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught;
The wise for cure on exercise depend;
God never made His work for man to mend."

As regards its utility from a national point of view, the chase compares most favourably with any other sport practised in the British Islands. In hunting we find everything conducive to make men temperate, hardy, active, and vigorous; it encourages decision of character, a quickness of perception, and the habit of grasping the full effect of circumstances in whatever situation we may be placed at a glance. In fact this faculty of grasping difficulties, and forming an immediate decision as to how they may be best encountered and overcome, is one of the main characteristics of those who succeed in riding brilliantly to hounds. In sporting phrase it is called "having an eye to a country." In our strongly-enclosed grass-lands no man and horse can go for many fields literally straight. Perchance in a fence there are only a couple of practicable places, and on landing into the field the man of decisive character makes imme-

diately for one of them. To hesitate is to lose his place, and he who vacillates between, or from want of observation fails to notice them, soon finds himself in the rear, and with no chance of regaining his lost ground until a check occurs. Whether the man who determines on his line at once is fortunate in the selection, depends, as I said before, on his possessing the quality of at once and instantaneously grasping the circumstances of the situation. If he can do this, he will have determined in his own mind the line the animal he is in pursuit of has most likely taken (more probably than not rightly), and at the same time he will have noticed everything within his ken which would be likely to turn him from that line, and on these conclusions he will have acted. But it is done, as it were, instantly; for the chase allows no time for deliberate consideration. Many men have this qualification in an eminent degree; others, although equally bold and courageous horsemen, can never acquire it, and in riding a chase if they attempt to "take a line of their own"—to use a technical term—are very soon hopelessly lost. At the same time all who hunt endeavour to acquire this art, if I may so call it, and a most useful training it is for any situation of danger or difficulty in which they may be placed. Another quality that is called forth is courage, for no man, unless he is possessed of what is called pluck, can ride over a strong country. The danger, no doubt, is much less than may be imagined, as out of the large fields of horsemen who every day during the season meet hounds, the percentage of serious accidents is very small, and of deaths still less. At the same time they do occur, and every man who hunts is liable to them. The slightest mistake in taking off at stiff timber may find him thrown on the other side, and his horse coming on him with fearful violence. A strong binder in a fence may be the means of placing him under his horse in the ditch, there to remain until he is dug out, or a short jump at a brook cause him to be precipitated into water of unknown depth. Yet hundreds of men every

day willingly encounter all these risks for the sake of hunting. I knew an instance in Northamptonshire of a farmer going out quite late in the evening, after the hounds had crossed his farm, to see if his stock had gone astray from gates being left open, as is often the case. His attention was attracted to something unusual in a ditch, and proceeding to examine it he found a horse on his back, and the rider wedged beneath him calling for assistance. He rescued him from his dangerous position, and after a little nursing by a good fire, and the administration of some stimulant, the man recovered sufficiently to be able to ride home. No doubt, save for being thus accidentally seen, he must have died before the morning; he was most profuse in his thanks to his deliverer, and promised to send him a cask of sherry in remembrance of his kindness, but, I am sorry to add, the farmer has never heard a word of him from that day to this. The incident, however, serves to show that with the chance of such mishaps in store, riding to hounds requires a certain exercise of courage in those who undertake it. Even men who do not profess to ride straight are liable to awkward falls from horses stepping in holes, open drains, and so forth, and rolling over them. Hunting men must also, perforce, be temperate, or their nerve soon fails them; neither can their constitutions stand the fatigue they are called on to undergo. In fact, a man must be active and hardy, as, not to mention the number of hours he is in the saddle, and the long distances he rides to and from covert, the actual chase causes severe exertion to the rider as well as the horse, and without falls he is sure to get enough of scratches, blows, and bruises to make an effeminate man very soon sick of the whole business. With regard to hardihood, we have only to consider the bad weather the hunting man voluntarily encounters in pursuit of his sport, for neither frost (as long as his horse can keep his legs), rain, or wind stops him; and I have known some hunt in snow, to show that they are the hardiest of the hardy.

I by no means contend that other sports do not, to a certain

degree, call forth the same qualities, but none—if we except deer-stalking, and that is within the reach only of a select few—call for them all in such a high degree as the chase, which is open to every one who has the means of keeping a horse.

Since civilization and luxury have advanced to such a height amongst us, the development of these qualities in our youth is nothing less than of national importance. We never know the day or the hour when we may be called upon to defend those near and dear to us with our strong right hands, and should the time unfortunately ever come, what immense allies will these qualities of which I have treated be found. A second Waterloo may be won, not only in the playing-fields of our public schools, but on the broad pastures of our hunting counties.

Xenophon, who said the art of hunting was from the gods, incited his countrymen to it as the best means of preparing, both mentally and physically, for military service, as well as keeping them from loose and enervating pleasures, and rendering them virtuous and good citizens, saying, "Those who make it their study, accordingly, to be continually labouring and learning something, choose toilsome pursuits and cares for themselves, but secure safety for their own communities; but those who decline to be taught anything because it is laborious, and prefer to spend their lives in improper pleasures, are characters of the very worst nature."

In our own times Charles Kingsley, poet, pastor, and not least, let us add, sportsman—for no man has written better or more lovingly on the subject—has said, "Woe to the class or the nation which has no manly physical training! Look at the manners, the morals, the faces of the young men of the shop-keeping classes if you wish to see the effects of utterly neglecting the physical development of man; of fancying that all the muscular activity he requires under the sun is to be able to stand behind a counter, or sit on a desk-stool without tumbling off. Be sure that ever since the days of the Persians of old, effeminacy, if not the twin-sister of cowardice and dishonesty,

has always gone hand in hand with them. To that utter neglect of any exercises which call out fortitude, patience, self-dependence, and daring, I attribute a great deal of the low sensuality, the conceited vulgarity, the high want of the sense of honour which is increasing just now among the middle classes, and from which the navigator, the engineer, the miner, and the sailor are comparatively free."

Happily we are drifting at express speed from those times, and hunting amongst those who can afford it, and athletic exercises for those who cannot, become daily more popular.

This brings me to another advantage the chase has over other sports, viz., that it is free to all. Deer-stalking, as I said above, may rival it in calling forth our greatest energies, but who amongst us can afford it? A very, very small percentage of even what are known as the wealthy classes can rent a deer forest. But the man who keeps but one horse can have, at any rate, an occasional day with the hounds. I was much amused a few seasons ago by a traveller in the grocery business, who contrived to take his country rounds for orders on horseback, and also contrived that his journeys should be made in the direction and on the days when hounds met, as often as possible. How that man enjoyed himself, to be sure, and how often he was blown up for being just in the very place he should not have been, yet I could have taken my hat off to him. A sportsman in practice he certainly was not, yet I much doubt if, out of the three or four hundred men who four times in the week met those hounds, a truer one at heart could have been found. I trust his gallops may add years to his life, as most likely they will. Here was a man with no more chance of pursuing any other sport than he had of becoming prime minister, able to enjoy the chase, if not to his heart's content, at least to a pretty good extent. No one sport brings all classes together like the chase, if we except perhaps the cricket-field. It is the cause of very few bickerings and heartburnings, and in its pursuit scarcely any interests clash. In fact, everything connected

with it may be said to be conducted on the voluntary principle. There is no law to compel people to have their land ridden over or to preserve foxes, yet throughout the length and breadth of England how few and far between are the cases of vulcipedism, or notices being served on hunting men not to trespass! This very fact alone speaks volumes in its favour, for were it not intrinsically good, people who themselves do not hunt would never submit to have their land trampled and their coverts disturbed.

Shooting has now become so expensive, and the right of it so much sought after, that it is a class amusement; and only those who have manors of their own, are wealthy enough to rent them, or have friends in either of those pleasant circumstances, can indulge in it. Neither can I allow it the same utility, in a national sense, as the chase, especially as pursued under the modern system. When a man went out to shoot over dogs and walked for his game, it was a different matter; but now, in many instances, all the shooter has to do is to hold his gun straight, and keep out of sight until the game is driven within range of it. There is a certain amount of strain on the nerve and physical exertion I admit, but it cannot be of such a healthy and invigorating nature as riding over a county.

Neither can shooting be altogether acquitted of having drawbacks which hunting is free from, and when we read, week after week, in the papers of serious affrays with poachers, and reflect that these mean too often murdered keepers, and several men sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, if not to worse things, who can say that for that reason alone, nationally speaking, the amusement of shooting is not to be compared with hunting.

Such things also as heartburnings and bickerings on account of over-preservation of game are elements in the reckoning which tell materially in favour of the chase. The damage done to crops and loss of poultry may be quoted on the other side; but my acquaintance with land, and knowledge of farmers and

farming, enables me to say with confidence that the former is more apparent than real, and the latter is as a rule, when the claim is not exorbitant and unjust, fairly paid for, and sometimes, I may add, even when it is.

Fishing can scarcely be put in comparison with hunting, as it is conducted in another element; but as the father of anglers himself dubbed it the contemplative man's recreation, I think we may fairly give hunting the preference as to its influence in rendering us a hardy and robust nation.

No doubt the lordly salmon takes a deal of tackling, and good wind and muscle, as well as knowledge of the gentle art to bring him into the creel; but, like the red deer of the Highland glens, he is only for the rich, and, nationally speaking, out of our reach.

As to the other denizens of our streams, I do not think their pursuit, health-giving and pure as it is, looked at merely as an amusement, is likely to develope any man either into an Antinous or a Hercules. In saying this, I must be understood as by no means wishing to disparage this or any other sport for the exaltation of hunting, but merely look at the question as to their influence on our race.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE NATIONAL UTILITY OF HUNTING AS COMPARED WITH OTHER SPORTS (*continued*).

"Give my horse to Timon;
It foals me straight and able horses."

In the last chapter I discussed this subject in connexion with shooting and fishing; I now come to the more important rivals the chase has to contend with in coursing, racing, and steeple-chasing. The first we may soon dispose of, it neither vies with shooting in inducing pedestrian exercise when indulged in on foot, *i.e.*, taking shooting in its best sense, over dogs, and not even its most ardent votaries would claim it as a rival to the hunting-field in the matter of horsemanship. Moreover, although holding a much higher place than racing, either on the flat or across country, it is by no means free from the taint of the betting-ring. And take the three sports in conjunction, we may say—

"The trail of the serpent is over them all."

Nay, I have heard that of late years, as much money changes hands annually over the Waterloo Cup as over the Derby. It may not, to an outsider, appear so easy for chicanery to enter into coursing as racing or steeple-chasing, but an undeniable authority in all three sports, one who had made their mysteries almost the study of a life, told me some years ago, that there was little to choose between them, and there were dodges in the coursing-field that the uninitiated would never dream of. That was before

the members of the ring had taken the Dog Derby under their protection to the extent that they have since done, and by no means such heavy books were opened on the event then as now. How far coursing has improved as a national sport under the patronage of the betting-ring I leave my readers to imagine, merely reserving my opinion that the "festering sore" has not penetrated so deeply here as on the turf, and that there are men, ay many men, who still course in public from a love of sport alone, and only have trifling wagers on the events in which their dogs are engaged. Still the point of the poisoned arrow is driven in, and coursing can no longer be considered as a sport without taking the element of gambling into consideration. Looking at it from the other side, we may class it as a quiet, gentlemanly-style of amusement, and arrive at the conclusion that were every greyhound swept from the face of the earth to-morrow, save in the matter of mild but healthy exercise to some thousands of our fellow-citizens, we should be neither better or worse.

Racing stands altogether on another foundation. No one can deny that if not the starting-point of the excellence of our breed of horses, it was for something more than a century the most important means of their perpetuation. Whether racing originated in England, as I suspect, first of all to decide questions of superior speed and endurance amongst hunters, or was handed down to us pure and simple from the games celebrated in Greece and Rome, matters not. To the turf we undoubtedly owe the speed and stamina of our modern hunters, hacks, and all horses beyond the mere slave of heavy draught. Herein we have an obligation which must cause every lover of horseflesh to look on racing with a feeling of veneration, if not respect, but

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
* * * *
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

And I fear the time has come when we must no longer look to

the turf as the means of supplying us with the class of horse calculated to get useful horses generally. Years ago, a sire would have had poor chance as a country stallion, who could not boast of gold cups and king's plates, carried off, as a rule, under high weights and often at four-mile heats. Men then endeavoured to breed a horse with sound legs and feet to stand the wear and tear of such work, and a constitution hardy enough to undergo the preparation necessary. Now the racing-man wants a very different animal; instead of developing bone and sinew until the time Nature intended he should do, he must be as big as a two-year-old as his ancestor was at four, and able to go at extraordinary speed for half a mile or five furlongs, *so as to pay his way* as a two-year-old. If he trains on, so much the better, but to win two-year-old races he is bred, and to that quality buyers, as a rule, look when assembled round the sale-ring. Speed is everything, soundness is little thought of if the trainer thinks he can get him through one season's preparation, and stoutness is looked on certainly as a boon, if a horse having the luck not to be knocked all to pieces in his early days should chance to possess it, but I fear very few breeders now take it into consideration when mating their mares. The result is, the stamp of horse that made us famous all over the world for hunters is now scarcely to be found; like the Dodo he has vanished, and the wiry and enduring half-bred stock he got has gone with him. It is no use to tell racing men this. Ask them for bread, and they give you a stone; talk of stamina and cleverness, and they tell you the horse has increased so much in height on an average in a certain number of years, whereby I conclude that he is so much the more difficult to mount and less useful when you have mounted him; for of the horse, as the hound, it may be said height does not constitute size. In fact ask them for a true-shaped horse, and they too often point to a long-legged, weak-jointed, shelly-weed, with neither feet or legs fit to carry his own body, if the flesh had not been boiled off him, and a predetermination to roaring, and all kinds of un-

soundness as an heirloom in the family—in fact, "an instrument of gaming." For a number of years racing had been a sort of foster-mother to the chase, inasmuch as it was the foundation from which the best hunters were drawn, not only in respect to sires, of which I shall give instances later on, but also that many horses too slow for the course were made hunters of, and, when carefully schooled, very superior hunters they became. I remember a sportsman of the old school, one very near and dear to me, saying that in his earlier days most of his hunters were selected from such horses as the trainers found a little too slow to keep in training, but that of late years, *id est*, since about 1830 or so, he had not been able to buy them. In early years also, hunter breeders had the chance of really good horses to which their half-bred mares were sent, as many noblemen and gentlemen who had what in old-fashioned phraseology were called "Capital horses," allowed the use of them to their tenants either free or at a nominal figure, and their neighbours could command them at a far less fee than would secure a subscription to an unsound weed in the present day. They kept them to get good wear-and-tear horses which could run at their county meetings, and win the King's hundred, run for in two-mile heats, long since I can recollect. Now this class of horse is out of date; no man who breeds for racing cares to patronize him. It may be surmised that under these circumstances he would, when found, drop into his proper position as a country sire, and, in some few instances, I admit he does. There are men like Col. Barlow of Hasketon, or Mr. Alfred Walker of Rugby, who, having a character for possessing horses of this description, secure them when they see them; and to one is due the sire of Lowlander (Dalesman), and the other that of Pathfinder, a Grand National winner, being preserved to us. Lord Spencer, Lord Middleton, Mr. Henry Chaplin, the late Hon. George Fitzwilliam, and Lord Fitzwilliam also, have generally bought a horse for this purpose when he has earned a name; but these are exceptions which go to prove the rule—in

fact, the few horses of this class now to be found are placed beyond the reach of the ordinary owner of hunting sires; and by whom?—by the foreigner, who, wiser in his generation than ourselves, has snapped them up at every opportunity. Both Tattersall's and Weatherby's could show records to prove that when a *sound* and *stout* blood horse is in the market, money is always forthcoming to buy him. With these the man who wanted a sire for country purposes could not compete, and perforce he has been obliged to put up with the weeds and cripples that they rejected, but which came within his means. Mr. Phillips also could throw a little light on the subject, as well as Mr. James Fisher and others who have bought for the colonies. What the access to good sires did in Yorkshire, at Petworth, and at a hundred castles and granges throughout England, the story of Prosper, who belonged to the Earl of Derby, of stag-hunting fame, will show. Prosper was a snaffle-bridle bay, by Milo, a son of Sir Peter Teazle, and carried Jonathan Griffin, Lord Derby's huntsman, for years. He was up to thirteen stone, and Lord Derby refused 700 guineas for him, and a thousand for him and his half-brother Milo. Prosper was out of a mare once the property of Sir H. Peyton, and they had Blenheim, an own brother to him, in the stables.

Sir Peter was himself the sire of a rare good hunter, out of a daughter of his own. Fancy in the present day a Sir Peter Teazle getting hunters, or even a sound, good son of such a horse! No, the Milos, Belzonis, Hundred House Snaps, and such useful sires, are too valuable to the foreigners to be wasted on English half-bred mares, even if they could be found, and I am sorry to say such a contingency becomes every year more unlikely. And, alas! most of their daughters have followed them across the salt sea wave, so that soon we shall be landed high and dry with neither sires nor dams fit to produce hunters.

I do not say that even now we have not short-legged, sound, useful strains of blood—Sir Joseph Hawley and Baron Roths-

child being noted for horses that could train on and stand work—but, when sound, they are beyond the hunter-breeder's reach; and we are daily breeding deeper and deeper into less useful sorts. Hence, as far as producing good useful horses for national purposes, I fear we must say the chase and the turf are divorced. Racing men now only look to what will yield a quick return; and, as one once wrote to a friend, "race for *excitement* and profit," and as long as they win, don't "care a d—— how good or how bad other people's horses are." This spirit of lucre in the present day alone animates most of them, and while handicaps and sprint races are in vogue, they are not likely to breed horses that are good for much besides racing.

The sister sport of steeplechasing was at one time thought to be a great encouragement to the breeding of horses with blood, pace, and size, but I fear it has scarcely answered the expectations formed concerning it, and but very few horses, if any, are produced especially for it. Formerly, high-class hunters were started when steeplechases were run at about twelve stone each from point to point, over a hunting country, but racing cast-offs soon superseded them, and many a cross-country crack, winner of big stakes, has been scarcely fit to carry the boots of an average hunting man through a chase of any length. In fact, hunting is one business, steeplechasing another, and those horses that have been good at both are the exception rather than the rule. The Colonel was, I believe, quite an old man's horse with hounds, and perfect in manners. The Demon, by Teddington, would also carry Jem Goater over a very blind, cramped country, in the most deliberate and perfect form, and earn his keep by winning half a dozen of steeplechases in the spring. Moreover, Count André rode him as charger all through the war with France (no man had a better), and finished up by winning another steeplechase with him when it was over. Mr. Arthur Yates's clever little horse, Bristles, was also good in either place; but these are the exceptions that go to prove the rule,

and although, no doubt, other instances might be found, steeplechasers taken generally are quite as likely to find their way between the shafts of a hansom cab, as between the knees of a hunting man, and nine times out of ten it is the fittest place for them. There is an obvious reason for this, which is so well explained by Harry Hieover, one of the best writers on sporting matters we have ever had, that I shall give it in his words. He says,—

"The exertion of the steeplechase horse seldom exceeds fifteen (minutes), generally less, but we must bear in mind that the hunter has to sustain his load for more hours by far than the race-horse does minutes, and, on an average, half as many hours as the steeplechaser is asked to carry his minutes: therefore, though exertion that may be called beyond the strength of the animal may last for a brief period, and even then excite our surprise and admiration, he cannot go on with it. . . . . If you hunt in a fast country, you will frequently get a burst very little inferior as to pace to a steeplechase. After the three or four miles of a steeplechase, distressed or not, the horse is clothed up and led home. After a burst of the same distance with hounds, his work is only, comparatively speaking, begun."

In another place the same author says,—"I know of few cases in which a man would probably deceive himself more in getting together a stud than by attempting to select them from steeplechase horses."

In one thing it might have, with a show of confidence, been anticipated that the steeplechase would be of advantage, viz., the discovery of horses as sires fit to get hunters; but, after some forty years in which the sport has flourished, it has done nothing of the kind, and I cannot now recall to my mind the names of half a dozen steeplechasers who have become successful hunter sires. Hence we must place it, as far as national utility is concerned, far below the legitimate chase.

Let me now pause for a moment to see what are the qualifications necessary in a really first-class hunter. First, he must,

to be called such, be up to not less than fourteen stone, as most men like to ride with something in hand, and the average of hunting men, with their saddles and bridles, would pull down considerably over thirteen. Next, he must have great endurance, for it is no uncommon thing for him to be out from nine o'clock in the morning until six at night—often even later—and if his master is not on his back the entire time, the second horseman is, and there is a very small portion of it in which he is not moving. For some part he is sure to be going at a great pace over heavy, rough, and uneven ground, often up to his knees and hocks in dirt, and constantly leaping fences, some of them large, and requiring great exertion to cover out of deep ground. To do this good wind is a *sine qua non*. He must also have liberty of action and activity, for, if he has not always what is termed "a leg to spare," he will come down half a dozen times in the course of a run. He must have great speed, or he cannot live with hounds, and good temper, or to ninety-nine men out of a hundred he is no use, though there are a few in every field who will put up with an ill-tempered horse if he is an *extraordinary* good one, otherwise he is sure to be discarded even by them. He must have a good mouth and manners, or he is not safe to ride with hounds, and, although he need not have high action, he must hack well enough to bring his master home after a long day without breaking his neck. I am aware that some very good hunters have been very bad hacks, but they are endured occasionally only on account of their great goodness in the field. Mr. Assheton Smith's Ayston was one of these, and was always led to covert with knee-caps on; but if he had not been a veritable wonder, he would have been discarded at once. Moreover, the hunter must have courage, or all his other qualities are useless. Here, I take it, are found a combination of qualities which render the horse useful for any purpose to which he can be put save racing and heavy draught. Take what place you will, except those two, and the heavy-weight hunter will fill it as

well as any horse you can find, and better than most. In carriage work, as a trooper, harnessed to a van, or even at plough or harrow, he can take his part and do his share of labour; and in encouraging the production of this class, even if it did no other good, I claim for the chase a sphere of great national utility. What colonel of a regiment would not jump to have his men mounted on weight-carrying hunters, if he could get them? It was in breeding hunters that our troopers, hacks, harness and van horses, were produced a few years ago. People did not breed with the idea of producing them, but hoped for a first-class hunter; those that fell short of the mark were put to meaner trades. True, in Yorkshire, carriage horses were and still are bred, without reference to the saddle; but, take England generally, and a hunter was the mark aimed at. I am sorry to say I must speak of it in a great measure in the past tense, for the foreigners have snapped up the mares, as well as the sires, wherever they could be found, though many a man was induced to part with his mares as much from the difficulty of finding a suitable mate as by the thirst of gold. The consequence is that really first-class weight-carriers are much more scarce now than they were a few years ago.

I will quote the opinion of one of the finest riders and best sportsmen in England on this subject, as it conveys my meaning much more ably than anything I could write myself:—

"We have now established half-mile races for our two-year-olds, as, with some few exceptions, the most important events of our English turf—our very Derbys and St. Legers—are but a scramble of a dozen furlongs, with little more than the weight of a child on a *very* young horse's back. With all the forcing by which art strives to expel nature, it returns in this instance, as Horace says, literally 'with a stable fork.'[1] We cannot get an animal to its prime at three years old who ought not to arrive at maturity till twice that age. Still, we continue to breed

[1] "Naturam expellas *furcâ*, tamen usque recurret."

more and more for a 'turn of speed,' utterly regardless of endurance, till our famous English race-horses have degenerated into such galloping 'weeds' that I myself heard an excellent sportsman and high authority on such matters affirm, in discussing the horse-and-hounds match which was to have come off last October, that 'he did not believe there was a horse at Newmarket that could go four miles at *all*—no, not if you trotted him every yard of the way!' This, of course, was a jest; but, like many a random shaft, 'pointed with sarcasm and winged with a laugh,' it struck not very far off the centre of the target. Even our hunters too (and surely if you want endurance in any animal alive it is in a hunter!) we are improving year by year into a sort of jumping camelopard. Where are the strong, deep-girthed horses on short legs of thirty years ago?—horses that stood just under sixteen hands, and could carry sixteen stone. Look at what people call a first-class hunter now (and it must be admitted that, for the high price he commands in the market; he ought to be as near perfection as possible)—look at him as you may, see him in fifty different specimens, with the Pytchley or Quorn hounds, any hunting day throughout the winter. He is a bay or brown—if the latter, more of a chocolate than a mottled, with white about his legs and nose. He stands sixteen two at least, with much daylight underneath him. He has either a very long, weak neck, with a neat head, or more often a good deal of front and throat, with a general bull-headed appearance that conveys the idea of what sailors term 'by the bows,' and argues a tendency to hard pulling, which, to do him justice, he generally possesses. He has fine sloping shoulders, and can stride away in excellent form over a grass-field, reaching out famously with his fore-legs, which, though long, are flat, clean, and good. Somehow, you are rather disappointed when you get on his back. With no positive fault to find, you have yet an uncomfortable conviction that he does *not feel like it*, and, for all his commanding height, you are subjected to no irresistible temptation to lark him.

When Mr. Coper asks you three hundred and takes 'two fifty,' as he calls it, alleging the scarcity of horses, the excellence of this particular specimen, and his own unbounded liberality, intense respect for yourself, and every other inducement that can mitigate the painful process of affixing your name to a cheque, you seem to give him your money without exactly knowing why; but when the new purchase *stops* with you in deep ground the first good scenting day, after you have hustled him along honestly for two and twenty minutes, you think you do know why exactly, and although you may be, and probably *are*, disgusted, you cannot conscientiously admit that you are surprised."

This was written some years ago, as all those who remember the much-talked-of Horse *versus* Hound match (which, by the way, fell through) must know. True as was the picture then, we have since gone from bad to worse, and, as hunting men know to their sorrow, even such moderate animals as are therein so ably sketched have not only risen in price, but have been much harder to obtain at *any price*.

It is clear that we can no longer look to the race-course as the fountain head from which useful horses are to be derived; and if our once boasted superiority in this respect is not to be totally annihilated, we must turn to the chase to stimulate their production. Thanks to a few noblemen and gentlemen who have bred blood horses, not with the view of racing, but as hunters, there is a little material left in the country to work on; and we see, every now and then, a good sound wear-and-tear, short-legged race-horse who strains back for a few generations to sound enduring blood amongst those brought out—such a horse as John Davis, for instance, but they become scarcer, alas! year after year. If more hunting men like the Duke of Beaufort, Mr. Henry Chaplin, Mr. Fenwick Bisset, and a few others, would secure such horses when they were to be found, and place them at the service of their tenants, one move, at any rate, would be made in the right direction. It is not for me, in such a work as the present, to write a disquisition as to how the deficiency is to be

encountered. It is sufficient to know that hunting men must provide for themselves independent of the turf. Place good sires within the reach of tenant farmers, and they will use them; for although of late years, from the high price of meat, horse-breeding has been much given up, when a farmer does breed, nine times out of ten he means a hunter. Whether he takes the most likely means to get it is another matter.

As is racing in the case, so are shows, perhaps, with the exception of the prizes awarded to sires, and these are too often swept away all over the country by one horse, or else awarded to an animal whose high fee places him quite out of the reach of half-bred mares. With regard to the horses shown as hunters, I have seen a good many, having attended most of the leading shows for a number of years, but amongst them very few on which I should care to risk my neck over a country. They are, no doubt, very grand horses to look at; but unless they can be sold to grace the stables of some foreign prince, I fear their utility, for the most part, ends. Of course there are exceptions, and a few of them have, I know, done good work with hounds; but others, even from the stables of well-known hardmen, have come out occasionally to jump a few big fences and go home again; while other cracks that I have seen in the field were very considerately and safely taken round by the gates, and never asked to jump at all. A few years ago, wishing to know the character of a horse which had taken first prize as a heavy-weight hunter, I wrote to a man who had every opportunity of knowing all about him. His answer was, "—— is a very wooden brute as a hunter, but good enough to stand still and look at. —— gave nearly —— for him (mentioning a very long figure); but though he had him for three years, I never saw him what I call ride him." So much for the show-yard and show-yard horses.

I cannot better close this chapter than by quoting a letter written during the last century by a nobleman to his agent in Leicestershire:—

"*St. James's, October* 12*th*, 1792.

"On the 2nd instant I returned you, in a parcel by the mail, the notices you sent me to sign. I hope you received them early enough to serve upon my tenants in due time without inconvenience to yourself. I must desire that all those tenants who have shown themselves friends to the several fox-hunts in your neighbouring counties, viz., Lord Spencer's, Duke of Rutland's, Mr. Meynell's, Lord Stamford's, &c., may have the offer and refusal of their farms upon easy and moderate terms; and, on the other hand, that you will take care and make very particular inquiry into the conduct of those tenants who shall have shown a contrary disposition by destroying foxes, or encouraging others to do so, or otherwise interrupting gentlemen's diversion, and will transmit me their names and places of abode, as it is my absolute determination that such persons shall not be treated with in future by me upon any terms or consideration whatever. I am convinced that landowners, as well as farmers and labourers of every description, if they knew their own interest, would perceive that they owe much of their prosperity to those popular hunts by the great influx of money that is annually brought into the country. I shall, therefore, use my utmost endeavours to induce all persons of my acquaintance to adopt similar measures; and I am already happy to find that three gentlemen of very extensive landed property in Leicestershire, and on the borders of Northamptonshire, have positively sent, within these few days, similar directions to their stewards, which their tenants will be apprised of before they retake their farms at next Lady-day. My sole object is having the good of the community at heart, as you and all my tenants know that my sporting days have been over some time ago. You are at liberty to make my determination upon this subject as public as you shall think proper."

What a fine old fellow that Leicestershire nobleman must have been, and what a striking contrast does this letter present to the actions of too many landowners in the present day, who,

not being able to hunt themselves, for the sake of filthy lucre let their coverts and shootings to tenants, who are little better than poulterers, and destroy the sport of half a country by killing foxes in order that they may slaughter so many hundred pheasants in a day, or to those who, keeping the shooting in their own hands, permit their keepers to do the same.

If it was true that hunting was for the benefit of a country in 1792 by bringing a large influx of money into it, when the men who hunted were, comparatively speaking, few, how much more so is it true now when hundreds hunt where tens were then seen at the covert side, when studs, on the average, are much larger; for second horses had not then come into fashion, and the great increase of wealth in the country has produced far more luxurious living in every way. What is true of Leicestershire is also true of every hunting country, though in a minor degree; and the man who preserves foxes and encourages the sport is a public benefactor, while he who sacrifices them either to his selfish pleasure (for selfish shooting must, in a measure, be considered when compared with hunting), or to a thirst for gain, must be content to hold a diametrically opposite position in public opinion. It has been written of late that hunting men are too exorbitant and imperious in their demands, and expect others to give way before their wishes in too great a degree; but when we look at the beneficent effect of their amusement on the country wherein it is carried out, I for one cannot endorse the charge, and if, as politicians now say, the greatest happiness of the greatest number is to be arrived at, hunting certainly should be yielded the *pas* by all the country sports, except perhaps racing and steeplechasing, with neither of which it clashes.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ANTIQUITY OF HUNTING.

I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear
With hounds of Sparta: never did I hear
Such gallant chiding; for, besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seem'd all one mutual cry. I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

It may seem going over needless ground to devote a chapter to the antiquity of hunting, as it must be pretty well agreed on all hands that, from a very early period after the flood, men resorted to the chase either from necessity or for pleasure. It is popularly accepted that Nimrod gained his kingdom from his proficiency in hunting; or, perhaps, rather that his labours in the chase gave him the hardihood and skill to gain the mastery over others, who accepted him first as leader, afterwards as king. In his case, I incline to the belief that his sport was rather the offspring of pleasure than necessity, or perhaps it was undertaken to clear the country round his habitation of such beasts as would be likely to prey on his flocks and herds, and that, having succeeded in this, others came to him to enjoy impunity from their ravages, and thus in time formed a kingdom, over which he reigned. In the case of Esau, being sent forth to kill venison and make savoury meat for his father before receiving his blessing, we have a distinct proof that hunting by him was carried on as a sport, and that Isaac had as keen an appetite for the proceeds of the chase as any old gentleman who holds

deer forests and pheasant preserves at the present day. Esau by no means hunted from necessity; his father had flocks and herds, and consequently meat in abundance, as well as riches of all kinds. It was not hunger that first sent the patriarch's son forth to the chase, but the same instinct which sends every Englishman who has the chance forth to hunt or shoot, as the case may be, in the present day—the love of sport implanted in the human breast, but more strongly developed in some races than others, as Esau had it in a much greater degree than Jacob. Neither was it want that made Isaac desire venison as the choicest food he could have ere bestowing his blessing. It was that love of game—wild game—that has descended to every one of us in the present day that made him send his son forth. He could have had lamb or kid (as he did, without knowing the difference), beef or mutton, at his pleasure; but that would not suffice—it was wild venison he wanted, the product of his son's cunning and skill. No doubt that grand old man was as proud of Esau's exploits in the chase as any father in the present day would be to see his first-born going bang in front from Billesdon Coplow to Allexton, or bringing down a stag of ten on a Highland hill-side by his own skill in stalking. He was the favourite, and he wanted to bless him—well, I don't wonder at it; from a boy, I have always liked him better than his brother Jacob, who, I can't help thinking, was a bit of a sneak, and would have earned more kicks than half-pence if he had been sent to a public school, which, by the way, would have done him no end of good.

Oh, dear! I am digressing again. It was not to show that hunting was ancient that I commenced this chapter, but to show that hunting by scent with a pack of hounds was ancient. Many authors who have written on the subject of the chase come to the conclusion that the hunting of the ancients was conducted by means of nets and traps, and coursing the animals with dogs which ran by sight alone, after the manner of our modern greyhounds, and that, where dogs capable of

running by scent were used, it was only to drive the game from covert into the open for their fleeter fellows. Amongst those who entertained this idea was the poet of the chase, Somerville, who says, in the introduction to his poems, "It does not appear to me that the ancients had any notion of pursuing wild beasts by the scent only, with a regular, well-disciplined pack of hounds." In the latter particular, perchance he may have been right; for Xenophon, whose authority is the earliest I can anywhere find for hunting hounds in a pack, treats us to a long catalogue of the faults to which hounds were in his day inclined, and to which a fair share of babblers and skirters would now be mere tarts and cheesecakes. I admit that he was, although the Beckford of his day, an arrant poacher, or he would not have recommended the use of nets; but I certainly gather that the hare, having once had the luck to escape those same engines of destruction, and the boy whose mission it was to knock her on the head when she fell into them, endeavoured to hunt her fairly down by scent, being at the same time, though, as open to a "holloa" and a lift as any modern huntsman on the grass with a flashy pack in hand and a thrusting field behind him. That his directions are intended for hounds running by scent, and not by sight, is certain from the instructions to the master, huntsman, or whatever he may be called, running after them to be careful "not to come in the teeth of them, for that would perplex them,"—this, I take it, being a mild form of remonstrance against getting over the line, which in these later days has developed into "Pray hold hard, sir!" "God bless you! hold hard, sir!" "God —— you, sir! will you hold hard?" Again, on catching a view, he is to cheer them on, and being himself thrown out, though he can still hear them opening on the line, but not see them, put that query, so popular in modern days, of "Have you seen the hounds?" and again, having nicked, encourage them by name, if running, but, should they be over it, give the equivalent for "Hark back!" and proceed to make his cast, having, like hare-hunters of an age not so very remote,

stuck up a stake to know how far they brought it. Again, when at a check, he cautions him against, by over-eagerness, driving them over the line. He also tells him to make every inch of ground good with a tired or beaten hare, leaving nothing unexamined, "as she then lies in a very small space, and sometimes shrinks from leaving it through weariness and terror." In fact, leave out the nets and you have as near a description of a modern hare-hunt in an enclosed or mountainous country as possible, and one that has brought back to my mind many similar scenes in the chase of the hare in England. Moreover, he continually, in his "Cynegeticus," speaks of scent in connexion with the chase; but, unlike Arrian, nothing of coursing entirely by sight. In fact, we constantly find allusions to either overrunning the scent, not owning it, or going off on a false one. He said, with great truth, "such dogs indeed may disgust people with hunting who have a strong turn for it."

That the old Athenian had a pretty good notion of what a hound should be, the following description will show:—

"In the first place, then, they ought to be large; and, in the next, they should have their heads light, short, and sinewy,[1] the lower jaw muscular, the eyes upraised, black, and bright; the face large and broad, the line dividing the eyes deep, the ears small, thin, and without hair on the back; the neck long, flexible, and round, the shoulder-blades standing out a little apart from the shoulders; the fore-legs small (short), straight, round, wiry; the knees straight; the sides should not hang down, but run along obliquely; the loins, their size medium, between long and short, should be fleshy, and not too soft or too hard; the upper flanks something between large and small; the hips should be round, fleshy towards the hinder part, not drawn together at the upper, but closely joined within; the part below the flank and the lower flank itself should be loose; the tail long, straight, sharp pointed; the thighs firm; the lower part of the

[1] Not a greyhound head, at any rate.

thighs long, full, compact; the hinder legs much longer than those in front, and somewhat lean; the feet round."

Let us compare this with Beckford's portrait of a perfect fox-hound, and, except in the matter of small ears, we shall not find so very much difference in the two :—

"Let his legs be straight as arrows, his feet round and not too large; his chest deep and back broad; his head small, his neck thin, his tail thick and bushy—if he carries it well, so much the better. Such young hounds as are out at elbows, and such as are weak from the knee to the foot, should never be taken into the pack. I find that I have mentioned a small head as one of the necessary points about a hound; you will please to understand it as relative to beauty only, for, as to goodness, I believe large-headed hounds are no way inferior."

Considering the difference in time and country, it appears to me that these great schoolmasters of the chase were pretty unanimous as to what a hound should be in shape and make, and the description of the Greek reads far more like a fox-hound than a greyhound, although he prohibited their being allowed to run foxes. In colour he was also quite orthodox, as he went in for pied hounds in preference to whole-coloured ones.[2] Then, to set all doubt at rest, he says they should pursue vigorously, with great noise and barking, and turning in every direction with the hare, and should follow swiftly and unmistakably, frequently winding about, and yelping only for good reason, and they should never leave *the track* to return to the huntsman. Dogs that run by sight as a rule run mute, hence it may be fairly inferred that the chase was conducted with a pack of hounds (he always speaks in the plural as of dogs) in Xenophon's day; but whether this mode fell into disrepute afterwards, when the vertragas or greyhounds became known, I cannot say. I may, before quitting the subject, also observe that hunting at this time appears to have been the privilege of private indi-

[2] Greyhounds are oftener whole-coloured than pied.

viduals as much as it is in England now, as indeed it would be under a republic. He also recommended to follow the chase on horseback where the country was suitable for such diversion. Probably, in that case, the nets would be dispensed with. In the directions for deer and boar hunting, Xenophon was far less orthodox in his notions, and the traps and gins with which the former was to be taken would disgrace any poacher of the present day.

Much better is the description of Varius as to the way in which the Cretan hounds did their work with deer, and I can scarcely believe that any one who was in a position to command their services would have descended to the use of snares and nets :—

> Seu canis umbrosam lustrans Gortynia vallem,
> Si veteris poterit cervæ comprendere lustra,
> Sævit in absentem, et circum vestigia latrans
> Aëra per nitidum tenues sectatur odores
> Non amnes illam medii, non ardua tardant,
> Perdita nec seræ meminit decedere nocti.

That, I take it, is as plain a proof that hounds were valued in ancient times for hunting a cold scent as could be wished for, and they might well be the ancestors of our old southern hounds, especially could we prove true what Tubberville says, viz., that "Brutus, being driven out of Italy for killing his father Silenus, son of Ascanius, came eventually into Britigne and Totness, and brought with him hounds which, a hart once found, would never leave him till his death."

Coming later on, to what are called the dark ages, we find no difficulty in ascertaining that numbers of people had hounds that ran by scent, though in all probability greyhounds were held in greater esteem. But there is very great difficulty in ascertaining what kind of hound was in use, as the old writers classed them so much according to colour, without giving any other particular characteristic of the breeds, and it is only when we reached the days of Gervaise Markham we see clearly that they had, like ourselves, both fleet and slow hounds, which ran by scent and not by sight. These I shall presently notice in their proper places.

CHAPTER V.

THE ANIMALS PURSUED IN ENGLAND AT THE PRESENT DAY.

Say what shall be our sport to-day,
There's nothing with deer, fox, or hare,
Too fast, too high, too broad, too gay,
For the *spirit* of *my old mare.*

ALTHOUGH, as I have shown, the chase was never so popular in England as at the present period, or enjoyed by such large numbers as now participate in it, we are far more restricted in the number of animals pursued than were our forefathers, without going back to that distant period when the ancestors of the now noted Chillingham cattle roamed in our forest, when the huge Bos Primigenius was found in the dense woods that once covered the fen districts on our eastern coasts; we can still find that they enjoyed a bill of fare denied to their descendants.

After the wolf had been extirpated from the low and fertile country, and driven, like the Celts, with whom he shared the land, to the wilds and fastnesses of Scotland and Wales, there was still the boar to be found in the royal forests. The good grey boar, the hart, the hind, the buck, the doe, the roe, the hare, the marten, were all hunted, as the following, which is copied from "Twice's Treatise on the Craft of Hunting," will show:—

And for to sette young hunterys in the way
To Venery, I cast me fyrst to go,
Of which four bestes be, that is to say,
The hare, the herte, the wulf, and the wild boor,

> But there be other bestes five of the chase:
> The buck the first, the second is the do;
> The fox the third, which hath ever hard grace,
> The forthe the martyn, and the last the roe.

Twice, or Twety, was grand huntsman to Edward the Second. Lord Wilton, in his "Sports and Pursuits of the English," says,—

"Of the animals of chase, they were divided by some into three classes, distinguished as beasts for hunting, beasts of the chase, and beasts which afford 'greate dysporte.' By others the division was into two classes, in which they are merely marked as beasts of sweet flight, namely, the buck, the doe, the bear, the reindeer, the elks, and the spytard, which is described as a hart one hundred years old; and beasts of stinking flight, which are the fulemart, the fitchat or fitch, the cat, the grey, the fox, the weasel, the marten, the squirrel, the white rat, the otter, the stoat, and the polecat."[1] Rather a curious assortment of game, and one that leads us to believe our ancestors were at times content to chase very "small deer" indeed.

There was then a great distinction between a forest and a chase, the beasts of forest being, as shown in the doggerel above, the hart, hind, hare, boar, and wolf; those of the chase, the buck, doe, fox, marten, and roe; the rest of those enumerated above, I take it, being free to all to hunt when and where they could find them.

In the present day the principal object of chase is the fox, who received such scant grace formerly, and in his pursuit more people engage and more money is expended than the beasts of chase formerly cost altogether. There are now over one hundred and sixty packs of fox-hounds in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and there is seldom a season that we do not see some small increase in their numbers; in fact,

[1] Strutt's "Sports and Pastimes."

large counties, which were a necessity formerly, when foxes were not so plentiful, are no longer needed, cannot indeed be properly hunted; and each year we find an outlying district, on the borders of perhaps two hunts, welded into a new one, by each giving up a portion which they seldom hunted. By this means sport is increased all round, more hunters kept, more men employed, and everything tends to the general good; for, as a rule, the more foxes are hunted, the better they are preserved, and there is no doubt but they show better sport. Thus, in a great measure, the fox has supplied the place, and more than supplied it, of those animals which, from increasing population, enclosure of waste lands, and other causes, have dropped out of the list as beasts of chase. There is no doubt he is best suited to the present condition of the country, and hence, on the principle of the survival of the fittest, others, who were at one time preferred before him, have had to give place.

Next in importance—at any rate as regards the numbers to which it affords amusement, though far below the stag with regard to sport—comes the hare. Ever held in high estimation, she to the present time is a means of healthy and pleasant recreation to thousands who have neither nerve nor pocket to indulge in the more exciting, though, at the same time, more dangerous and expensive, sport of fox-hunting. This will be seen when I say that about one hundred regular packs of harriers are to be accounted for in England and Ireland. I am sure that, at the same time, there are a considerable number of small private packs and trencher-fed lots that are known nothing about out of their own immediate neighbourhood; consequently they are to be found in no published list of hounds. Neither amongst these do I include the foot-beagles, which are kept in some few localities.

Of stag-hounds, the United Kingdom can boast seventeen packs, and of these sixteen are dependent for their sport on turned-out deer, so that, in speaking of beasts of chase, I may

say that there are only in reality the Devon and Somerset, which of course hunt hinds also in their proper season.

Of buck-hounds we have at present no regular pack to my knowledge, although the chase of the fallow buck is by no means extinct, as for some years past Captain Lovell every spring has had a month amongst them in the New Forest. The does, I believe, are never now hunted.

Roebuck hunting has fallen into disuse for some few years, though it is not so very long ago that a pack of harriers regularly hunted this elegant little animal in Dorsetshire during the spring. Why it was given up I have never heard, but they now shoot them instead.

Next in importance comes the otter, which is largely hunted on the Borders, in Wales, part of Shropshire, and in Devonshire; but as the packs are, for the most part, private, and have no regular countries, moving about from one place to the other as otters are heard of, pretty much in the same manner that fox-hounds did years ago, it is impossible for me to give any idea of the number in existence. I can only say that they appear to be on the increase (which is an encouraging fact), and that the only pack the meets of which are made public is the Carlisle otter hounds.

The badger has for ages dropped out of the ranks as a beast of chase, though many still amuse themselves by digging him out with terriers. Nevertheless, he is hunted occasionally in wild, rough countries, where he still abounds, at night, with fox-hounds, and affords good sport to those who do not mind sacrificing a night's rest. Old Jem Hill was, I believe, fond of pursuing this sport in Wychwood Forest, now a clear field. And Jack Parker, the huntsman of the Sinnington, is a great adept at it, and, when I was in that country a few years ago, showed me some of his hounds, which were noted badger-hunters. He assured me that their note was totally different, when pursuing the badger, from what they uttered when on the line of a fox, and that, although the latter were moving about at night, the

hounds, when badger-hunting, would take no notice of them. He was especially anxious that I should see the sport; but as it only takes place in the summer, I had not the opportunity. I believe, however, that he has had some of the best sportsmen in England, and more than one noted M.F.H. amongst them, as his companions in these badger-hunting expeditions.

The foumart is never now hunted to my knowledge, and Captain Hopwood, of Bala, North Wales, kept the last pack of hounds for the purpose in the country—in fact, the only pack of which any record has been preserved. As this is from the classic pen of Nimrod, and the hunting of this animal will be no further alluded to, perhaps it may interest some of my readers if I transcribe the paper which appeared in the new series of the "Sporting Magazine," December, 1841. Nimrod says,—

"I have at last been able to procure a description of a kind of hunting previously unknown to myself, and such it must be to the vast majority of your readers. I allude to a pack of what are called foumart hounds, kept by Captain Hopwood, a gentleman of family and fortune, at present residing at a beautiful seat in the neighbourhood of Bala, North Wales. As the system he pursues, and the diversion afforded by it, must be something of a novelty in the well-beaten track of the chase, it cannot fail of being interesting; and I have it in my power to send you a sketch of one of the hounds used in this species of hunting, which resembles, to no inconsiderable extent, the old Welsh broken-haired fox-hound, so called because by his fine nose foxes could be hunted by the drag at nearly all hours of the day from the hills, where they had been busy among the sheep or lambs, to their earths, where they were either digged to or caught with nets placed at the mouth of them.

"By way of giving some idea of the sort of sport Captain Hopwood's hounds afford, I will transcribe part of a note from himself to a neighbouring sportsman, arranging for the next day's meeting, namely, the 21st of June last past. It was not intended to meet the public eye, and is therefore most likely to

contain the 'plain unvarnished tale.' And I am sure the writer will pardon the liberty I take with him in transcribing it, for the information of the sporting world, on a subject heretofore strange to them :—

"'Dear ——,—I despatch this by a messenger, as I think it advisable to be with you by half-past four to-morrow morning, so as to avoid the heat of the day.

"'Our last chase proved a severe one. We went out late, owing to rain, and thinking to do but little. We struck a hunt at a quarter to twelve o'clock at the top of the (Bala) lake, above Llangower. Went up the hills in the direction of Arran ; came down, and ran the mosses above the lake. Again turned up, and, running to the hills, leaving Arran on our left, went within six miles of Dolgelly, where we crossed the high-road to the right, ran through the cover, and for two hours up into the mountains, our extreme point being Llanfareth.

"'At half-past six o'clock I stopped the hounds, scent being very low, owing to the severe and continued rains, and they reached their kennel by twelve o'clock at night. Having, however, had two days' rest, they will be fit to face the Montgomeryshire foumart to-morrow, weather permitting.'

"Now, I know enough of this country to say that from point to point of this run could not have been under the distance of fourteen miles, and over a rough country. Captain Hopwood hunts the pack himself, assisted by a whipper-in.

"The following letter from a gentleman who joins the captain in this novel diversion will more fully explain the system pursued in the field and elsewhere :—

"'You once asked me to give you a description of Captain Hopwood's foumart-hounds, and having now (July 10th, 1841) come to the end of what may truly be called a splendid season, I have much pleasure in doing so to the best of my ability, as I think you will be interested by an account of a kind of sport not much known in the south of England.

"'The kennel consists of from seventeen to twenty couples of

hounds. As to the origin of the breed, Captain Hopwood is not able to satisfy my inquiries; but the dog most resembling them is the old broken-haired fox-hound still to be found in Wales. They are also similar in appearance to the otter-hound, though smaller. The pack usually consists of from five to ten couple in the field; the time for turning out depends on the weather. In hot weather, as early as four o'clock a.m. is requisite; but with a moderate temperature, from eight to ten is a good time, and one of the most successful hunts of the season commenced at noon. As the animal never moves in the day, the hounds hunt on the trail of the previous night. The usual mode of proceeding, on turning out in the morning, is for the huntsman to keep the hounds as close to him as possible till he comes to the place of meeting, when they are allowed a slight range. As soon as they touch upon the scent, the dogs pack, and immediately set to work. The huntsman must now display his skill by endeavouring to put them on the *toe*, as they will run the heel with equal readiness. Supposing he succeeds, they then follow the scent of the animal through all its turns to its place of security, where the hounds come to what is called a 'set,' which generally terminates the hunt, as killing the foumart in the open is a very rare occurrence, and only happens when, being surprised in a lair not secure enough to satisfy him, he bolts, and the hounds run in upon him. Supposing the hounds to have come to a set, it is then tried to ascertain, by the assistance of the terriers (three or four of which always attend the pack), whether the foumart is at home, and, if so, a consultation follows as to the practicability of unearthing him. If he can be dug out, he is either bagged for the sport of another day, or worried by the hounds. In case the earth proves impenetrable, which frequently happens, the hounds are allowed to bay some time, so as to frighten the foumart, which generally induces him on his next *sortie* to take a longer run. They are then drawn off, and brought to the spot next morning, when they will hunt him through all the rambles of the intervening night.

A stranger to the sport would scarcely imagine the length of the runs afforded by these little animals; ten or fifteen miles is not unfrequent, often nearly straight, and on some occasions they have run twenty miles from point to point!

"'The pace of these hounds with the foumart, when the scent lies well, is not unlike that of good harriers; but I call the sport more interesting from the greater length and straightness of the runs, affording some faint approximation to fox-hunting. The male foumart, like the dog-fox, affords better sport than the female. Lest I may seem to have been describing some animal unknown to either the sportsman or naturalist of the south of England, I must add that the 'foumart' is the name given to the fitchet in those countries in which it is hunted, and is the term Captain Hopwood always uses; and as this neighbourhood is so much indebted to him for the introduction of a kind of sport peculiarly suited to its rough nature, he has the best possible right to call by his own name the little animals thus suddenly invested with importance. It is needless to add that Captain Hopwood's establishment, both here and at Hopwood (in Lancashire), is conducted in the best style, both as to diet and breeding of the dogs. The mode of hunting in Lancashire may present some trifling variations from what I have witnessed in this country, and, owing to the lateness of our crops here, the sport may be pursued six weeks or two months later than it can there, having only closed last week.'

"I wish the writer of the above excellent letter had favoured me with a sketch of the foumart. My notion of the fitchet is that it is an animal too small for the chase. A polecat—and such I imagine is the one in question—is equal[2] to anything requiring wind and speed as the means of escape from slow dogs. A terrier now in my room killed one in my stable-yard, three years back, measuring, from the snout to the tip of the tail, a good yard. He bit the dog on the nose, and severely,

[2] Query, did not Nimrod mean unequal?

but all to no purpose, as he was dead in a few seconds."—Nimrod.

The marten-cat was, until towards the end of the last century, used to enter young fox-hounds, and Beckford thus speaks of them :—

"If you have marten-cats within your reach, as all hounds are fond of their scent, you will do well to enter your young hounds in the coverts they frequent. The marten-cat being a small animal, by running the thickest brakes it can find, teaches hounds to run covert, and is, therefore, of the greatest use. I do not approve of hunting them with old hounds; they show but little sport, are continually climbing trees; and as the covert they run seldom fails to scratch and tear hounds considerably, I think you might be sorry to see your whole pack disfigured by it. The agility of this little animal is really wonderful, and though it fall frequently from a tree in the midst of a whole pack of hounds, all intent on catching it,[3] there are but few instances, I believe, of a marten's being caught by them in that situation."

They are now, I fear, nearly extinct, but a gentleman of my acquaintance told me that, in his younger days, he had seen them hunted with hounds.

[3] I have often heard of foxes escaping under similar circumstances. One occurred about two years ago in Mr. Tailby's country, when the fox was forced from a great height apparently into the jaws of the pack, and then escaped.

CHAPTER VI.

FOX-HUNTING—THE FOX.

Aha! the fox! and after him they ran;
And eke with staves many another man.
Ran Coll our dogge, and Talbot, and Gerloud,
And Malkin with her distaff in her hand.
Ran cow and calf, and eke the veray hogges,
So fered were for berking of the dogges,
And shouting of the men and women eke,
They ronnen so, hem thought her hertes brake."

In commencing my sketches of the modern chase, it is only right to start with the most popular, and that, beyond doubt or cavil, is fox-hunting. The reasons for this it is not for me to enter on at present; they will employ my pen later on. Now the fox is my subject—not the pleasure of hunting him. For this I need plead no excuse, as it must be clear to all that, if he did not exist, there would be no chance to hunt him. He is, except occasionally, when very forward riders are out, the first person in the run; the pioneer, the hinge on which the whole machine acts, the Hamlet of the play, whose part being omitted, all the rest becomes null and void. Hence it is meet that I treat of him ere saying aught concerning the chase, by which he is made the means of our diversion.

The fox of to-day holds a very different position in society from that assigned to his ancestors. In the early days of England's greatness he was held in small honour amongst sportsmen, and the quotation from old Dan Chaucer, with which I

have headed this chapter, will very fairly show how he was appreciated by the mob. In those days the *vox populi* was decidedly against him, and it has often been a source of wonderment to me how *vulpes vulgaris* escaped the extirmination which overtook his cousin-german the wolf. The old Norman knew him not as a friend, and the protecting hand which was spread as a shield of defence around hart and hind, buck, doe, and roe, besides confining the Saxon to his own acorn-fed pork, let him long never so much for a dish of brawn from the real wild boar, was withheld from him. True, he did not go in for such large game as the wolf, and hence his raids on herd and fold, supposing he made them, were of a less extensive order; but it is said, I believe truly, that men bear great ills with more equanimity than small ones, and his occasional thefts of poultry must have been quite as irritating in their way. Think for one moment of a Saxon farmer, ground down by his landlord, as he undoubtedly was, unless historians are great liars, badly housed and none too well fed, whose utmost endeavours, whether by patiently bearing all his wife had to say, by turning a deaf ear, or, as was sometimes done, bringing her to a proper sense of subjection to her lord and master by the use of a stout cudgel—fancy an unhappy wight in this situation, waking some bitterly cold winter morning—they had cold winters then, I believe—to find that all his endeavours to procure a peaceable home were rendered null and void by a predatory rogue of the vulpine family having made free with the good dame's hen-roost, requisitioned half her goslings, or taken a tithe of the ducks. Think of this, I say, and remember, there was no landlord at the castle, who cared one jot for his welfare, no poultry fund to which to apply for compensation, and you will wonder with me how it was that foxes ever survived in sufficient numbers to lay the foundation of that sport in which England now glories. No doubt the deep woods and forests which then abounded were much in his favour; strychnine was unknown, and keepers had not yet come to breed pheasants by the thousand. But

that stout old Saxon, with his months of leisure in the winter, and his innate love of sport, must have been a terrible enemy, more especially as he knew no law in the matter, and was egged on by self-interest and a shrewd tongue. Foxes, I believe, lived then honestly when they could, as they do now, notwithstanding all that is laid to their charge; but in cold, hard winters, with few rabbits and hares to fall back upon, their larder must have been a scanty one; and as the hen-roosts were scarcely built on such scientific principles as those which shelter the prize Cochins and Brahmas of the present day, their honesty must have been sorely tried. That they took care of themselves is no small honour to them, like other robbers, they have managed to hold their own, and in process of time have come to be looked on not only with connivance, but even the eye of consideration and respect, and finally the protecting ægis of society has been thrown over the once-despised fox. What a fine emblem of the career of many families who started, some from the old marauding barons, others from astute but unscrupulous courtiers, and perhaps still more from unscrupulous merchants and traders, is the fox! Had heraldic devices any truth in them, one half or more of our distinguished or would-be-distinguished families should have the fox for their crest. But I am wandering again. Well, I believe I committed myself to stray thoughts on the title-page. Cunning, boldness, and sagacity, coupled with by no means an overweight of scruples, at length brought Reynard into honour and notice, as it has done many a one before and since. Of a truth his day was somewhat long in coming, and he can scarcely be said to have much more than come into fashion as the Stuarts went out.

We can pretty well fix the date when hounds first began to run foxes in the open, and his chase was turned from the digging out and trapping business, from the following facts:—Gervase Markham, in his book of "Country Contentment," published in the year 1615, in the reign of James the First,

classes him with the badger, as affording a chase of no repute for the horseman, and recommends a sort of rough terrier for the pursuit. And Oliver St. John, in a speech against Strafford, says, according to Macaulay, "Strafford was to be regarded not as a stag or hare, but as a fox, who was to be snared by any means, and knocked on the head without pity." This must have been some twenty three or four years later.

Soon after this period, however, a change must have come over the aspect of affairs with regard to the fox, for we find Addison, if not writing, at least editing, a description of the Coverley Hunt, in 1711, in which the following passage occurs: "His stable doors are patched with noses that belonged to foxes of the knight's own hunting down. Sir Roger showed me one of them that for distinction sake has a brass nail stuck through it, which cost him about fifteen hours' riding, carried him through half a dozen counties, killed him a brace of geldings, and lost above half his dogs. This the knight looks upon as one of the greatest exploits of his life. The perverse widow, whom I have given some account of, was the death of several foxes; for Sir Roger told me that in the course of his amours he patched the western door of his stable." As the said Sir Roger was fifty-six years old at the time the sketch of him is supposed to commence, and allowing him to have been between twenty and thirty as the most likely age when his ardour for the chase and passion for the widow sent him forth in pursuit of the foxes, we gather that, some thirty-five years after the speech of St. John, the fox had become an honoured object of pursuit, and his trophies were cherished when he had been killed; that, so far from his chase not being considered eligible for horses, as in Markham's days, it had become a great trial of their endurance, if not speed; though that foxes were still scarce and unpreserved we may gather from a following passage, where it is said,—"The constant thanks and good wishes of the neighbourhood always attended him, on account of his remarkable enmity towards foxes, having destroyed more in one year

than it was thought the whole country could have produced. Indeed, the knight does not scruple to own, amongst his most intimate friends, that, in order to establish his reputation this way, he has secretly sent for great numbers of them out of other countries, which he used to turn loose about the country by night, that he might better signalize himself in their destruction the next day."

Little thought the author of the paper in the *Spectator*, as he penned these lines, what a satire he was writing on Masters of Hounds in a later day, and how surely the nefarious transactions of Leadenhall were shadowed forth in the words he penned. This, however, is not to the point; there may be foundation for the charge in the manners of the time, or it may be as apocryphal as the chase of fifteen hours through six counties after a fox. Neither Budgell nor Addison were sportsmen, or at any rate only such a sort as permitted them to be spectators of a hare-hunt; yet we may take them as fair exponents of the manners of their time, and just portrayers of the society amidst which they lived. And it is evident fox-hunting was then considered the sport of the young and robust, and hare-hunting suited to old age and the decline of life. "In proportion as his passion for the widow abated, and old age came on, he left off fox-hunting; but a hare is not yet safe that sits within ten miles of his house."

This is a marked change from the sentiments of thirty or forty years before, as regards Reynard. Although still accounted as vermin, and his death rejoiced over, he is no longer snared and knocked on the head, but hunted honourably to his death with horse and hound, and has his mask preserved as a trophy of the chase, even as it is now. He gradually rose from this time forth in public estimation, yet it was not until long after that he could be said to have held a position, and been what would now be termed "in society" for those who hunted him, and, as far as we may judge, were very well pleased with the job, could not refrain from reviling

and using opprobrious epithets concerning him and his doings.

Thus Somerville, who, despite what has been said by Nimrod as to his bestowing less pains on the chase of the fox than that either of the stag or hare, has, I think, surpassed himself in his third book, and who was born 1692, and died 1742, and wrote the chase during the latter part of his life, says,—

> But yet, alas! the wily fox remain'd,
> A subtle, pilf'ring foe, prowling around
> In midnight shades, and wakeful to destroy,
> In the full fold, the poor defenceless lamb,
> Seized by his guileful arts, with sweet, warm blood,
> Supplies the rich repast.

Again,—

> For these nocturnal thieves, huntsman, prepare
> Thy sharpest vengeance. Oh! how glorious 'tis
> To right the oppress'd, and bring the felon vile
> To just disgrace!

Nay, he cannot even let him break covert without a sneer at his honesty,—

> The conscious villain, see! he skulks along,
> Slick at the shepherd's cost, and plump with meals
> Purloin'd. So thrive the wicked here below.

It is very clear that, in the first part of the eighteenth century, he had made but a small way towards the high position he now holds; yet Somerville must have been a keen fox-hunter, if his verses do not belie him, and the chase which he describes is such as many of us would like to see oftener than we do in the present day. If a professed sportsman was thus hard on poor Reynard, it could not be expected that others, to whom the joys of the chase were as vanity and vexation of spirit, would spare him; and we find Thomson at about the same date making libellous charges against him as follows:—

> Give, ye Britons, then,
> Your sportive fury, pitiless to pour
> Loose on the nightly robber of the fold;
> Him from his craggy, winding haunts unearth'd,
> Let all the thunder of the chase pursue.

Though, to tell the truth, he was scarcely so hard on the fox as he was on his pursuers after all.

From this time, however, our good friend Reynard was to emerge as it were from the chrysalis state in which for nearly a century he had been involved. No longer was he to be hunted at odd times and seasons with harriers when he could be found, and, as it were, by accident, but regular establishments were to be kept up in his behalf. Fox-hunting was to become the sport of the nation, and the means of giving a livelihood to thousands, not to mention spending fortunes in remote places which would scarce have heard the jingle of a guinea had it not been for the chase. Names like Beckford and Meynell soon came on the scene—the former as the greatest writer on hunting matters England has yet seen, the latter as the founder of a country which still stands at the head of all English hunts, and to which the choicest spirits of the chase year after year resort.

There is some difference, I trow, between the establishment of William de Foxhunte—who looked after this branch of sport for Edward the First, with his six couple of fox-hounds, two boys, horse to carry the nets, and William Blatherwick, who, though also called huntsman (unless, indeed, he is the same person), must, I take it, have been first whip, or the equivalent for that personage—and the one Meynell organized at Quorndon.

I have thus endeavoured to trace the fox, from the day when he was held almost in abhorrence, to the time when he became a gentleman at large amongst us, whose life, save during the few hours he submits to his destiny in being hunted, is one of ease and enjoyment. In fact, I have sketched, as far as my powers will allow, his social history, and shown that he only attained his proper station with the advance of civilization.

Now let me turn to the natural history part of the subject, and first say that there are supposed to be three distinct kinds in our island—the greyhound fox, the bull-dog fox, and the cur fox. As the former is generally found in those mountainous parts where foxes are *not preserved*, I look on him as the indigenous species, as he is beyond all controversy the best. That situation and climate have a great deal to do in developing this difference in foxes, I feel assured; but they have been only too well seconded by over-anxious sportsmen, who have imported cubs from abroad, and in too many instances given us a lot of short-running, ringing brutes, with neither heart nor powers to go straight over a country.

The preservation of game is also a great drawback to finding *good* foxes; for although they may not be, and I know are not, killed on many estates where game is strictly preserved, from the abundance of food which they find around them, there is no inducement to travel, and consequently, when hunting comes on, they know nothing of the country, but run round and round until they are killed; while, from their fat state and want of condition, they could go but a very little distance before a good pack of hounds, even if they tried. Still worse is it when they are regularly fed by the keepers near the earths, to prevent their doing mischief; and where this system is pursued, although the owner of the estate may have a good show of foxes, as far as numbers are concerned, he might nearly as well keep so many prize rabbits, and they would show about as much sport. This, however, bad as it is, is not the worst of the case, for in too many instances a litter or two of cubs are bred, and, as soon as they are old enough to live without the vixen, she is made away with, her spouse having probably gone the way of all flesh long before. The orphans are tenderly nursed close to the earth with whatever vermin or offal the keeper can get; he earns his fee, and, when hounds come, it is simply a slaughter of the innocents. What is wanted for sport is old and wild foxes! We do not expect a hound to be at his best during the first season; how,

then, can we reasonably expect it of the fox? He wants time to mature his powers and learn a country. This, in the present day, is a thing he seldom gets. We do not often hear now of the long runs which formerly took place; the reason is, the want of the wild old foxes our ancestors found. They had not the abundance now to be seen in many hunting countries, and could not afford to crack up a couple of brace in a day; they were longer finding, and, I think, had more blank days; but when they did find one, it often turned out to be a tough old customer, which cut out their day's work for them. We have less of these about now, and only at long intervals find one, who has for years escaped hounds, steel, and strychnine; when we do, there is a Greatwood or Waterloo run recorded, though, from foxes being more plentiful, these long runs are generally spoilt by the suspicion of a change, if such a thing is not actually known to have taken place. In fact, under the present style of hunting, one fox, be he ever so good, could scarcely stand such distances before hounds.

Another great drawback to finding fliers is the insatiable thirst for blood displayed by some masters and huntsmen. They forget that cubs must be educated as well as hounds, and that the best way to teach them to fly is to stop hounds from those that break covert, and keep rattling those that stay behind until not another is left. A fox who has once found safety in flight is much more likely to try it again than to hang about. I know this system is now pursued by a master in one of our most fashionable countries with great success, as the sport he shows will testify. He goes cub-hunting, not to anticipate the regular season by having runs over the open, but to rout the coverts and teach his foxes to fly, obtaining plenty of blood for the entry from those that decline to do so. From these remarks it will be gathered that I consider foxes in the present day not so good on an average as those found a few years ago, and such, no doubt, is the case; they live too easy and luxurious a life as a rule, do not work sufficiently hard for their living, and are not

allowed to grow old enough to show long runs. In fact, luxury and effeminate habits have deteriorated them, as they will any and everything over which they obtain influence. Whether the foxes of the present day are not better suited to the men of the present day than the old wild ones is a matter into which I shall not enter here. Foxes differ much in various countries, and the goodness of the animal is generally, I fear, in an inverse ratio to the roughness of the country, what is called the shires generally producing shorter runners than rough wild tracts, which many men would not care to ride over. This is partly owing to the absence of large woodlands, for it is a notorious fact that woodland foxes are stouter than those bred in the gorse coverts in an open country, also that stub-bred foxes are much better than those which are reared in an earth. Lord Portsmouth's country is an instance of this; they scarcely stop an earth in it, and their foxes are very stout; but, on the other hand, I must say that, save his lordship's own, there is scarcely a keeper to be found in the country, so that there is no artificial feeding, which in some measure accounts for it.

The fox, like the dog, has a wonderful instinct for finding his way home from distant parts, and, some years ago, some cubs were branded and taken out of Whittlebury Forest and turned out in the Suffolk country; the next season one was killed, after a good run in Northamptonshire, having found its way back. A similar story is told in "Daniel's Rural Sports:"—

"The old Duke of Grafton had his hounds at Croydon, and occasionally had foxes taken in Whittlebury Forest and sent up in the venison-cart to London; the foxes thus brought were carried the next hunting morning in a hamper behind the duke's carriage, and turned down before the hounds. In the course of this plan, a fox was taken from a coppice in the forest and forwarded as usual; some time after a fox was caught in the same coppice, whose size and appearance was so strikingly like that got on the same spot, that the keepers suspected it was the fox they had been in possession of before, and directed the

man who took him to London to inquire whether the fox hunted on such a day was killed or escaped; the latter having been the case, the suspicion of the keepers was strengthened. Some time after a fox was again caught in the same coppice, which those concerned in the taking were well assured was the fox they had twice bagged before; to be, however, perfectly able to identify their old acquaintance, should another opportunity offer, previous to his third journey to town he had one ear slit and some holes punched through the other. With these marks he was despatched to London, was again hunted and escaped, and within a very few weeks was retaken in the same coppice, when his marks justified the keepers' conjectures, in spite of the improbability of the fact." Sad to say, he verified the proverb of the pitcher that goes often to the well; this was his last journey, as he was killed and eaten after a severe chase.

That they are in much fear while being hunted I do not believe, unless hounds are pressing them exceedingly hard, and the following instances will tend to show that they cannot run in any great terror. "Scrutator," an old M.F.H. himself, says, in "Horses and Hounds:"—

"We were at last brought to in a piece of turnips not far from a sheep-fold, where the hounds for a moment or two threw up. Observing a shepherd at a short distance, I despatched the whipper-in to know whether he had seen the fox, and what had happened, in the meantime allowing the hounds to have their own way. Something I could see was amiss. The whipper-in galloped back, and told me the shepherd had seen the fox, which had come very near to where he was with a rabbit in his mouth. 'A rabbit in his mouth, Jim? nonsense!' 'Tis true enough, sir; the shepherd showed me the rabbit which he took away from him.' 'We will hear more of this presently. Which way went the fox?' 'Forward, sir.' The check was explained, and, holding the hounds about a hundred yards in advance, they settled down again to the scent, and dashed

through the turnip-field. Jim now came up, and gave me the shepherd's story about the rabbit. He saw the fox coming through the turnips towards where he was standing with something in his mouth. The turnips being high, he was not seen by Mr. Slyboots (whose attention was most probably directed to what was passing in his rear); that, upon the fox coming nearer to him, he first threw his crook at him, but he would not drop the rabbit; he then set his dog after him; the fox, showing fight, dropped the rabbit, which therefore fell to the shepherd's lot."

Incredible as this story may appear, there is no doubt, from its being related by a man of Mr. Horlock's standing, of its being correct. And I can bring a similar occurrence, witnessed by a friend of mine in Northamptonshire, which will tend to corroborate it. He, with several others, had left the Pytchley at the time Mr. Anstruther Thomson hunted them near Walton Holt, and, making their way home, they stopped at the inn at North Kilworth for gruel. Whilst standing before the door, they saw a fox crossing the paddock in front of the house, where he deliberately seized a chicken. A few moments later, the hounds came along, so that they were actually hunting the fox at the time he caught the chicken—slowly, it is true, but hunting him they were.[1]

Foxes seldom become tame, unless caught very young,

[1] Since this was written, the following has appeared in the memoir of the Rev. J. Russell, published in "Bailey's Magazine" for May, 1878, which quite corroborates the instances I have given as to what a fox will do with hounds behind him.

"Russell had found a fox one fine scenting morning on the outskirts of the moor, and was bringing him at a trimming pace over the wide heathery waste of Hawkridge Common, and thence into the hanging woods that crown the Barle with such majestic scenery, when Russell's ear was attracted by the wild screams of a woman, apparently in the greatest distress. The hounds at that moment were running apparently exactly in the direction of the hubbub; and, as Russell rode up to the spot, he beheld a woman rushing frantically after them; and, catching sight of him, she exclaimed, in a voice of agony, 'Oh! Mr. Russell! that there fox hath

and I knew a master of hounds who had one that, though he could handle him for a time, on being introduced to a brace of vixen which had been dug out of some dangerous earths for safety sake, before they were liberated again, turned savage at once, and would show his teeth, and hiss like a snake, if any one came near him. The late Mr. Thomas Nevill, of Chilland, some years ago had an old fox, which had been caught in a gin, brought to him, and, as his foot was injured, he kept him. Strange to say, although full-grown, he became perfectly tame, and would allow his master to carry him about in his arms. He was a noted rat-killer, and, when a barn was being emptied, or a rick removed, was of far more use than any terrier, be he never so good. There is also one now at the "Haycock" at Wansford, which can be handled like a dog.

tookt away our little specklety hen; I seed un snap un up, and away to go I did!'

"'Then,' said Russell, 'I'll kill him, and give you another hen;' and on he went with his hounds.

"And die he did, directly afterwards, for within two gunshots of the spot, just over the Barle, the hounds ran into him; while the dishevelled carcase of the 'poor little specklety hen,' still warm with life, was picked up by the disconsolate owner, bringing the deed home, without a doubt, to the rapacity of that hunted fox."

The run had been one of an hour and forty minutes, without a check. The woman was a poor charcoal-burner's wife, and it need not be said was amply rewarded for her loss.

In the same article is the following anecdote of Mr. John King, of Fowelscombe, at one time Master of the Hambledon Hounds in Hants:—

"He had been running a fox merrily for upwards of forty minutes; and coming up to a farmyard, by which he was making a short cut, he saw the fox dash into a flock of ducks, seize a mallard just below the green of his neck, and carry him off across a large field; when the hounds, running into him, Mr. King picked up the mallard, then quivering in its last gasp, and restored it to its owner."

These facts, as well as those I have given, are related on such good authority, that no one can for a moment question them. And, in the case of my friend at North Kilworth, and the Rev. J. Russell, I am glad to say the eye-witnesses are now alive.

Of the escape of foxes from hounds, the following occurrence, which happened in 1793, in the neighbourhood of Imber, Wilts, is perhaps as singular as the annals of hunting can record. A fox, being hard run, took shelter under the covering of a well, and, by the endeavours used to extricate him from thence, was precipitated to the bottom, a depth of one hundred feet; the bucket was let down, he laid hold of it, and was drawn up some way, when he again fell; the bucket being let down a second time, he secured his situation in it, and was drawn up safe, after which he was turned off, and fairly beat the hounds. Foxes will, no doubt, seek very extraordinary places of refuge at times when pursued by hounds, one instance of which occurred with the Hampshire hounds, in a run which was thus described at the time by Nimrod :—

"It was upwards of fourteen miles, in a straight direction, and over so severe a country that there were several bad falls, and it was for some time doubtful whether or not the coroner would not have been in requisition. Mr. William Heysham rode at a stile, which his horse refused. On turning him at it again, he saw the cause of his refusal. Mr. Hugo Mildmay was lying on the other side of it, covered with dirt, with his head under his shoulder, apparently dead, and an hour expired before animation was restored. The fox on that day was so pressed that he ran into a dwelling-house, and secreted himself in the pantry among the bacon. Foster said it was one of the severest and most brilliant day's sport he had ever seen with hounds."

Æsop, of Hants, thus describes the same run :—

"The Pantry run took place January 11th, 1825.

"They met at Beauworth, and, without hanging in covert, or crossing the same field twice, the fox was killed at Town Hill, three miles from Southampton." A picture of the fox on the bacon-rack in the pantry was painted by Mr. Collyer, of Chilland, and afterwards lithographed. Sawyer and Mr. Scotland went first into the pantry, and, of others, those who had the best of it were Mr. John Taylor on Sealing-Wax, Mr.

Samuel Taylor, Mr George Butler on the Admiral, Mr. Frederick Heysham on Ollipod, and Mr. Collyer. Sawyer, talking it over, said, 'I think we all came down that day.'"

We have heard of foxes beating their pursuers repeatedly, by leaping into a tree, or running along the top of a fence; but Tom Hills, the last season he hunted the old Surrey, was baffled in a curious manner. I quote the account as it appeared in "County Quarters," Baily, April, 1876:—

"The season before Tom gave up the old Surrey, he found the same old 'stumpy' fox three consecutive fortnights at Tye Copse, which always took them a clipper down to Julian's (where Mr. Herries, the banker, lived) into some laurels, where he was lost. The reason was that he ran to a little cascade, and up or down the stream, where there was a big hole in a rock, into which he jumped. One of the gardeners found out his secret, the hole was stopped, and Tom could have brought him to hand, but he was spared, and eventually killed in Banstead Park, having buried himself under some leaves."

Most of us have seen the print of the fox being done to death in a cottage, greatly to the chagrin of an old lady, who is trying to keep the pack out with a broom; and I am not prepared to say whether the affair really took place as delineated, or the picture is merely apocryphal. The following, however, happened with Mr. Tailby's hounds on January 27th, 1876:—

"They met at Ilston-on-the-Hill, and found at Hardwicke a fox who broke away without being holloaed, so that hounds settled well to the scent, and ran to the right of Noseley, over the brook to Staunton Wood, then a very fast ring on the farther side, and back to the wood. Here they rattled him for about a quarter of an hour, when he broke, recrossed the brook to Hardwicke, when he turned by Shankton Holt, across the Gartree road, to the right of Carlton Hall, over the brook to the back of Burton Overy, across the Burton brook to Glen Oaks, down to Mr. Simson's at Glen, and then to Stretton Hall, where, with three couple of hounds close at his brush, he

went through the window of the housekeeper's room, where he was killed, Mr. Tailby having succeeded in stopping the body of the pack, or the scene of confusion would have been worse than it was. The time of this run was one hour and ten minutes without a check, and the farthest points, as the crow flies, nine miles. Of course, as hounds ran, the distance was much greater."

Having now touched on most other points concerning foxes, I must say a few words as to their destructiveness amongst game and poultry. Here I much fear that he cannot be wholly acquitted of having the habits of kleptomania, though the immense good he does in killing vermin must be offered as an offset against it, for it is well known that a principal item in his *menu* is the field-mouse; he is also an enemy to rats, beetles, and various other things which it is much to the farmers' interest should be kept down. If we may believe gamekeepers and hen-wives, he has a most voracious appetite; but, as a rule, their stories must be taken with considerable reservation. I had always been incredulous as to his taking lambs, and feel pretty well certain that in the South of England, where I passed my early days, that he never indulges in such delicacies; but, as a hunting farmer, one very fond of the sport, told me not long ago in Northamptonshire, that he really had lost lambs by foxes, I suppose that there either they are of a more voracious kind, or the long-woolled sheep, which prevail in the grass countries, are not so energetic in the defence of their young as the Hampshire Downs, who, I am sure, would give any fox that invaded their precincts a very warm reception.

One of the most amusing accounts I ever heard of—a bill being sent in for damage done by foxes—was told me by Henry Sebright, huntsman to Mr. Luttrell, of Dunster Castle. He said the Duke of Cleveland, where he was whip, came to the meet laughing one morning, and told a friend he should save a hundred a year. On being asked how, he replied, "By ignoring all poultry bills. I have just had one in for a sow and litter

of pigs. If this goes on, I shall hear of their eating a cow and calf next." Another good story I have heard, of a very jolly lawyer who acted as secretary to a hunt not a hundred miles from London. He was sent in a bill for a great amount of turkeys, and, on going to pay it, was asked by the servant if he was a hunting gentleman. "Yes," was the reply, when he was told he might sit down in the back kitchen until her mistress could attend to see him. He lighted his cigar, and did so in company with some labourers who were waiting to be paid. Presently, in came a dog with a turkey in his mouth, when one of the labourers said, "Well done! that's fourteen you've killed, at any rate!" On being ushered in to pay the bill, the lawyer said he must call evidence on his side, and, the man being called up, proved no unwilling witness, so that a very considerable item was knocked off the account at once, no doubt to the chagrin of the good dame, who must have regretted her incivility in allowing him to sit in the back kitchen, but for which he would never have come to the knowledge of how so many of the turkeys went.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FOX-HOUND.

On the straightest of legs and the roundest of feet,
With ribs like a frigate his timbers to meet,
With a fashion and fling and a form so complete,
That to see him dance over the flags is a treat.

In the last chapter I treated of the fox—the most popular animal in creation at the present time. Now let me say a few words concerning the fox-hound, who, if he does not rival, at least stands next him in public estimation, and deservedly so, for look the whole canine world through, from the gigantic St. Bernard to the tiniest toy, and what can you find to (I will not say rival: as well might the stars seek to rival the sun: but) compare with him? Look at him as he stands, fleet as a race-horse, graceful as a woman, full of life and frolic as a schoolboy, and strong as Hercules. Look him well over and find one harsh outline, one curve or line which does not harmonize, if you can. Do you want intelligence, note his countenance; activity, watch his lithe frame as he vigorously bounds from side to side; strength, look at his great bone, straight legs, compact frame, and broad back, loins, and quarters. There he is, the acme of power in a small compass, the very embodiment of the *multum in parvo* idea. Detect one ounce of lumber, cut away or alter one line that would not mar the whole, as completely as it would in the Venus de Medici or the Apollo Belvedere, and then own that he is the king of the canine world. The greyhound can scarcely outstrip him for speed, the bloodhound for nose; while

as to pluck, dash, and endurance, himself alone can be his fellow. Have you an eye for colour? Look at the gay tints of his coat, so bright and diversified, yet so harmonious. How is the black shaded into tan, and the tan to white! How the dark or smutty tinge round eyes or muzzle gives a determined resolute appearance to the countenance! Look him well over, drink in all his points and beauties, and then answer the question, Where did he come from?

Many ways of solving this question have been devised, none of them in my estimation satisfactory. As nearly all start on the hypothesis that the fox-hound is descended from the blood-hound or talbot, and has been brought to his present state of improved speed and energy by means of some cross—seeing how totally different in every characteristic, save that they both pursue their prey by scent, are the bloodhound and fox-hound—it is certainly difficult to imagine how those who have endeavoured to enlighten the world on this subject could have got this idea into their head, more especially as we know that, even as far back as the time of Xenophon, there were several different kinds of hounds in use. However, the idea once started, one and all of our writers have steadily followed each other like sheep in it, and only differed as to the kind of cross by which the change from bloodhound to fox-hound was brought about. The stumbling-block in their way appears to me to have been the impression that the fox-hound was a fresh creation at the time fox-hunting first came in fashion. Had this been so, and had he resulted from a cross of any kind, we should have had the wonderful phenomena of one of the most perfect animals as regards combined speed, strength, endurance, and grace, brought to perfection in a very short number of years—at any rate under a hundred. I say brought to perfection because I believe the fox-hound to have been as good and as speedy during the last three decades of the eighteenth century as he is at present. And it is a well-known fact that the earliest pack of hounds, kept solely for hunting the fox, was at Wardour Castle, between

1690 and 1700, and that these hounds, or rather their descendants, afterwards passed into the hands of the celebrated Hugo Meynell. The next pack of which we have any record is the Brocklesby, established 1713. And in 1730 Mr. Fownes' hounds were sold to Mr. Bowles, and astonished the Yorkshiremen; about this time Lord Hertford's hounds, hunting from Sandiwell Park, Gloucestershire, in the Cotswold country, first went uncoupled and drew coverts in the modern style. In twenty years from that time, several packs were established, while, before the century was out, the celebrated matches between Mr. Meynell and Mr. Barry took place. Thus we see, if the hounds resulted from a cross, that cross, for the first half of the eighteenth century, was in very few hands, and yet, in the latter half, packs sprung up all over the kingdom.

This, to my mind, is a clear proof that, when men took first to fox-hunting, they already had a hound adapted to the sport, and who only wanted entering to his game to become a fox-hound. That he was very perfect soon after fox-hunting became general, the writings of Beckford prove to demonstration; that he was a different hound from the harrier, Somerville shows us where he says,—

> A different hound for every different chase,
> Select with judgment; nor the tim'rous hare
> O'ermatch'd destroy."

And I think we may fairly assume from this, that, for whatever purpose he had been used before that time, he was no mushroom or the result of a cross, but a dog of old-established and well-known breed.

Before, however, reverting to what he was or whence he sprung, I must return to my assertion that the fox-hound was as good in the latter part of the eighteenth century as at present, because I know that here I differ from well-known authorities who have written on the dog. Stonehenge, for one, bases an opinion that the fox-hound has improved in speed, on the fact that in

Beckford's description of a fox-chase he represents the terriers as being up and speaking to the fox in the covert, before he is killed, which, says Stonehenge, they could not have been, with hounds going the pace they do at the present day. That argument would hold good had Beckford described a burst straight away without check or turn, and the fox run into in the open. But any one who reads his run over carefully will see that he has not done so, but that he rather describes a good hunting run, in which more than one check occurs sufficient to let a terrier, who cuts off corners, and keeps going, in with the pack again. First there is a turn in the covert, where they change foxes, and the pack divide; then a check, where the hounds make their own cast; and *Trueman* hits it off. Quickly another check, in which the huntsman is advised to make a wide cast forward, as a sheep-dog has coursed the fox; then a holloa, where Beckford says, "Hark! that holloa is indeed a lucky one. If we can hold him on, we may yet recover him, for a fox so much distressed must stop at last. We shall now see if they will hunt as well as run, for there is but little scent, and the impending cloud still makes that little less. How they enjoy the scent! See how busy they all are, and how each in his turn prevails!

"Huntsman, be quiet! Whilst the scent was good, you press'd on your hounds—it was well done. When they came to a check, you stood still, and interrupted them not. They were afterwards at fault. You made your cast with judgment, and lost no time—you must now let them hunt. With such *a cold scent* as this, you can do no good; they must do it all themselves. Lift them now, and not a hound would stoop again. Ha! a high road, at such a time as this, when the tenderest-nosed hound can hardly own the scent! Another fault! that man at work there has headed back the fox. Huntsman, cast not your hounds now; you see they have over-run the scent! Have a little patience, and let them for once try back."

Now if this is not slow hunting I don't know what it is, and

it would have sent a Melton field home in no time; so that if a terrier *did not get up*, he would not be worth his keep.

Then they have a burst in view to the covert, where he would be tailed off for a time; but there is plenty of work ere he is killed for the little one to regain his place, as the author says, "He is now in the very strongest part of the cover. What a crash! every hound is in, and every hound is running him. That was a quick turn! Again another: he's put to his shifts. Now Mischief is at his heels, and death is not far off. Ha! they all stop at once; all silent, and yet no earth is open. Listen! Now they are at him again! Did you hear that hound catch view? They had over-run the scent, and the fox had lain down behind them." But I need not quote further, as it is plain there was plenty of time for the terriers to get up and have a turn at him at last, let the pace have been fast as it may in the burst; so this proves nothing as to the hounds being slow. But I have more than negative evidence to support my view of the case, for Daniels, who published his "Rural Sports" in 1801, and consequenty about twenty years after Beckford, whose first letter is dated 1779, says, "After a very severe burst of upwards of an hour, a fox was, by my own hounds, run to earth at Heney Dovehouse, near Sudbury, in Suffolk; the *terriers were lost*, but, as the fox went to ground in view of the headmost hounds, and it was the concluding day of the season, it was resolved to dig him." However, as Daniels, in narrating the incident, says "some years since," we may fairly suppose that from ten to fifteen years elapsed between the time Beckford wrote and this incident—a period in which very little appreciable difference in the speed of hounds could have taken place.

I now come to a still stronger argument, that the fox-hound had at this period arrived at perfection, viz., the public and private trials run over Newmarket Heath on trail-scents. I will not inflict the thrice-told tale of these contests on my readers, but simply state that Mr. Barry's Bluecap and Wanton, a four and three year old, ran, on the 30th of September, from the

Rubbing House at Newmarket town end to the starting-post of the Beacon Course, against Mr. Meynell's Richmond and a bitch, whose name is not preserved, when Richmond was beaten by upwards of a hundred yards, and Meynell's bitch never came in at all. The ground was crossed in a few seconds more than eight minutes. Threescore horses started—twelve reached the end, and the twelfth was Rib, a King's Plate horse, ridden by Will Crane. Seven to four was bet upon Mr. Meynell's hounds before starting, and the match was for 500*l.* Col. Thornton's Merkin challenged to run any hound of her year, five miles over Newmarket, giving 220 yards, for 10,000 guineas, or to give Madcap 100 yards, and run the same distance for 5000 guineas. Merkin's trial was four miles in seven minutes and half a second, and she was sold in 1795 for four hogsheads of claret, and the seller to have two couple of her whelps. After this there was some tall talk with Madcap and his brother Lounger, who went as a stallion-hound to the Duke of Northumberland, and hound-racing fell into abeyance, I hope never to be revived, for the fox-hound is far too noble an animal to share the fate of the race-horse, and come into the hands of the "six to four" element.

No doubt objection will be taken to the time of these trials as incorrect and exaggerated, but I must observe that men like Col. Thornton do not risk 10,000*l.* or 5000*l.* without having pretty reliable data to go upon, and consequently, though perhaps not quite correct, they are near enough to prove the immense speed of the fox-hound at that early date, when he had not come into *general* use as a fox-hound more than from forty to fifty years. I must also say it appears strange that, while the Duke of Queensbury's cricket-ball and carriage matches should pass unquestioned, so much doubt is thrown on the performances of horses and hounds in these old times.

One other argument I shall bring forward in proof of my assertion that the fox-hound was as good then as now—at least in outward form and appearance—and the artist shall bring his pencil in proof. Let any judge of hounds look at Ringwood, a

Brocklesby crack, figured by Stubbs, as he hangs in the huntsman's house at Brocklesby Park, and say how far short he falls of hounds in the present day. Moreover, let him then look at the fox-hound bitch and pups, figured in Daniels's "Rural Sports," published 1801, and say if the recent prize-winner at the Peterborough Show can give her one ounce as regards symmetry, quality, and appearance; or, turning to Merkin in the same volume, let me ask him if, in his experience, he has ever seen a more powerful or grander bitch. Nay, were we to take the fox-hounds figured in the latest edition of "Rural Sports", by Stonehenge, and other works on the dog, as a comparison, should we not say that we had fallen very far short of the old standard? But, happily for masters of hounds in general, and those from whose hounds they were taken in particular, *they do not* represent the fox-hound as he is.

Having thus endeavoured to show that we have improved little or nothing in fox-hounds during the present century—for, in spite of the assumed increase of speed, I do not believe that hounds, in reality, go any faster now than then (if they did, racehorses could not live with them), but that we are deluded into the idea of their being faster, through a quicker style of hunting them—I may now turn again to the origin of the fox-hound.

Some pages back I said that, when men began to hunt the fox, they found a hound already suitable for the purpose, who had only to be entered to the new game. That hound was what was known in the time of Gervase Markham as the northern hound, who, no doubt, improved by careful breeding during the last 200 years, now figures as the fox-hound.

Tradition and popular belief says he is a cross of the southern hound and the greyhound, or some other lighter dog. For my own part I see no reason to credit this, nor can I understand why two or more sorts of hound may not have been coexistent in England at one and the same time, in early ages as now. If we, for argument sake—though I do not admit as a fact—suppose the big, heavy dog, known as the southern hound,

to be *a* (or shall we say *the*) indigenous breed, there is surely no reason why the Romans, the Saxons, the Danes, or the Normans, should not have introduced a lighter and fleeter kind. They may even have been the result of the Crusades (as was the grey breed of hounds brought from Tartary by St. Louis of France), and imported into England by some proud baron, with a taste for pace a little in advance of the age in which he lived.

In a former chapter I commented on the similarity of description between the perfect hound of Xenophon and a model fox-hound of the present day. May not the race of which he wrote by some chance have come to our shores, either through the Romans or when our Crusaders returned from the East? At any rate, in Markham's time, he was here in England as an established breed, and that writer who has sketched his portrait says not one word as to his being produced from a cross, but rather, on the other hand, recommends a cross with him and the southern, or heavy hound, as the means of procuring the hound most adapted for the chase of the hare in his day—a very similar proceeding to that in vogue with many masters of harriers now, who go to the fox-hound to infuse a little more dash and speed into their pack. His description of the northern hound, both in shape, make, and style of hunting, tallies exactly with the hound of the present day. Let us see what he says:—

"But if you will choose a swift, light hound, then must his head be more slender, and his nose more long, his ears and flews more shallow, his belly more gaunt, his tail small, his joints long, his foot round, and his general composure much more slender and greyhound-like; and this in the generality for the most part, and all your Yorkshire hounds whose virtues I can praise no further than for scent and swiftnesse, for to speak of their mouths they have only a little sharp sweetnesse like a jigge, but no depth or ground like more solemn music.

"If you would have your kennel for the training of your horse only, labouring thereby to bring him to the full perfection of speed, touch, and toughness, then you shall compound

your kennel of the lightest, nimblest, and swiftest dogs, such as for the most part all your northern hounds are, which, running swiftly away with the chase, will draw your horse up to that extraordinary speed, that he will forget all ease and loitering, and acquainting himself daily with the violence of such exercise, being so familiar therewith that in the end it will be less troublesome unto him than a slow gallop; and hence it was and is, that the north parts are so famous for the touch and swiftnesse of their horses above all other countries in the kingdom. For it is certain that their horses are not better bred there than in other places, but their exercise is much stronger and violent through the natural swiftnesse of their hounds, inasmuch that unless a horse either out of nature or education be brought to more than ordinary speed, it is impossible that his master should either see sport, or keep company with his companions. You shall understand that these swift hounds are, as before said, out of their haste and nimbleness and metal, more subject to make defaults than other hounds, yet full as curious and full of scent as any other, as you shall perceive by the quick knowledge and apprehension of their own errors, casting about of themselves and recovering the scent, and so going away with the scent before any huntsman can come up to help them."

Surely this is as true a sketch of a fox-hound as one need want, over-running the scent at times through eagerness and metal, and then, as Will Deane said of his pack, spreading out like a rocket the moment they are at fault. I lay much stress on this point because it is a peculiarity of the fox-hound; other hounds that have not his blood in them being inclined to potter about, and tie on the line the moment they come to a check, instead of casting forward.

In another chapter I shall have again to allude to the speed of these hounds, which I think can be proved to have been much greater than is generally supposed.

That their descendant, the modern fox-hound, was very much improved between this era and the time when Beckford wrote

or Merkin was tried, I have no doubt; but there, at any rate, was the stuff to work upon—a hound of distinct breed and strongly-marked characteristics such as would be found in no cross-bred animal, which characteristics have been handed down with little or no change to the present day. There may be some truth in the assertion of an old writer on hounds, that "a couple of southern hounds removed to the north, and suffered to propagate without art or mixture, in a mountainous country where the air is light, and they will by sensible degrees degenerate, and their bodies will become lighter and their voices more shrill;" but, unfortunately for the theory of our northern hound being produced in this way, the heavy hound was found in its greatest purity also in the northern county of Lancashire, and in a mountainous district. So that I must set down the fox-hound as a distinct breed from those distant ages which are beyond the reach of history, for want of evidence to the contrary.

At the present time the fox-hound is in greater repute than any known dog in existence, and is used in every kind of chase to the almost total exclusion of all other breeds; and we find him used for the chase of the stag, buck, hare (dwarf fox-hounds), and even otter as well as the fox, while, like everything else, he has wonderfully increased in value of late years. What price such packs as the Belvoir, Brocklesby, Milton, Berkeley, Quorn, Duke of Beaufort's, Lord Portsmouth's, and other cracks, would now make, if they came into the market, it is impossible to conjecture. Two thousand has been by no means an unusual figure for a pack of good reputation; and I know that a year or two ago a noble earl offered four thousand for a celebrated kennel of hounds in the south of England, which large sum was refused because he wished to remove them from the country in which they were bred—the owner preferring to take half that amount in order that they may continue to hunt their old country. It must, however, be remembered that this was a very celebrated pack indeed, and one to which nearly all

the best kennels had resorted for sires. The greatest prices that have up to the present time been realized, for hounds by public auction, occurred at the sale of Lord Poltimore's dog-hounds in the spring of 1870. They were purchased originally from Lord Portsmouth, who formed his pack from the Vale of White Horse, the Craven, and the Vine, all which packs he purchased:—

LOT 1.

Age.	*Name.*	*Sire.*	*Dam.*
5	Labourer	Bertram	Lively
4	Rifler	Mr. Lane Fox's Rifler	Skilful
3	Admiral	Mussulman	Airy
2	Nestor	Lexicon	Namesake
1	Argus	Lord Macclesfield's Actor	Waspish
1	Potentate	Pedlar	Fairmaid

(220 Gs., Major Browne.)

LOT 2.

5	Spartan	Woldsman	Susan
3	Metau	Lord Portsmouth's Major	Songstress
2	Gambler	Lord Galway's Gambler	Monica
2	Warrener	Woldsman	Ladyblush
1	Minister	Stripling	Mindful
1	Pilot	Pedlar	Sanguine

(460 Gs., Major Browne.)

LOT 3.

7	Mussulman	Lord Macclesfield's Mulciber	Frantic
4	Archibald	Lord Galway's Layman	Adelaide
2	Boaster	Bertram	Melody
2	Vauban	Voyager	Airy
1	Gannymede	Lexicon	Genial
1	Limner	Spartan	Lively

(400 Gs., Major Browne.)

LOT 4.

4	Boxer	Bertram	Fairmaid
4	Linguist	Lord Galway's Layman	Rosamond
3	Noble	Nautilus	Musical
2	Alarac	Lord Galway's Gambler	Adelaide

LOT 4 (*continued*).

Age.	*Name.*	*Sire.*	*Dam.*
1	Laureate	Spartan	Lively
1	Ringwood	Rifler	Amulet

(393 Gs., Major Browne.)

LOT 5.

6	Pedlar	Archer	Proserpine
4	Ottoman	Duke of Rutland's Chanticleer	Curious
3	Nectar	Nautilus	Musical
2	Contest	Lord Galway's Gambler	Concubine
1	Gorgon	Lexicon	Genial
1	Lancaster	Lucifer	Lively

(500 Gs., Major Browne.)

LOT 6.

5	Lexicon	Bertram	Lively
4	Sailor	Lord Galway's Layman	Starlight
3	Sorcerer	Wamba	Starlight
2	Whipster	Woldsman	Lively
1	Acrobat	Lord Macclesfield's Actor	Waspish
1	Anamelake	Stripling	Mindful
1	Wellington	Woldsman	Lord Portsmouth's Secret.

(600 Gs., Sir Algernon Peyton.)

LOT 7.

6	Gainsborough	Warrior	Gertrude
4	Merrimac	Archer	Musical
3	Latimer	Wamba	Ladyblush
2	Labrador	Stormer	Legacy
1	Larkspur	Spartan	Lively
1	Roman	Rifler	Amulet

(600 Gs., Major Browne.)

Total entered hounds, 3170*l.* Unentered ditto, 195*l.*

Mr. Tailby's dog-hounds, though they sold well in 1872, made nothing like such sensational prices; and for the present, I suppose, we shall continue to revert to Lord Poltimore's when high-priced hounds are talked about—that being the best on record, with the exception of Mr. Osbaldeston's, which made 6000 gs., and

five couple of his were bought in at 1300 gs. Since the days of John Warde and Mr. Horlock, fashion has much changed with regard to size, and a twenty-six-inch fox-hound is now a *rara avis in terris*—in fact, many say now, keep your dog-hounds to three and twenty inches, and get your bitches as near to it as you can, while others advocate a more marked difference in the sexes. It is strange that while we are all for big horses—and what would have been looked on as a good-sized one in my younger days is called a neat little horse in this era of sixteen-two giants—there should be such a rage for small hounds; but so it is. However, only those who have an immense amount of walks, and great facilities for drafting, can keep their packs down to the twenty-three inch standard, and the dog-hounds run, as a rule, from twenty-three and a half to twenty-four inches; but, except in some few packs, a young one must be very clever indeed to be put on if he tops that height. Lord Coventry's Roman is perhaps the best example of a big hound that has found favour at the stud, and Lord Radnor has inherited the mantle of Lord Kesteven in the liking for full-sized ones; but, though the Rutlandshire lord never jumped with the notion of small hounds, the Wiltshire earl quite out-Herods him in his liking for size, and has hounds which in most kennels would be sent off to Mr. Bisset, to disport themselves after the red deer over Exmoor.

Much discussion has of late years arisen as to whether the fox-hound still possesses the power of running a low scent that he formerly had—one side contending that hounds were never better in that respect than at present, while others say that by breeding too much for appearance we have lost the nose, and, in grasping at a shadow, let go the substance. I am by no means inclined to put faith in the opinion of those who take this view of the subject, as I think, were they given the chance, our hounds would hunt as low a scent as ever, and that the fault lies entirely in their education. The fact is, the system of hunting in most countries is entirely altered, and people would no more

have the patience to watch hounds puzzling out a cold scent, bit by bit, than an audience in one of our fashionable theatres would sit out one of the old mystery plays with which our churchmen were wont to amuse the public in the middle ages. Hounds are not taught to hunt now as they were then; if they cannot go the pace, the huntsman must do it for them, and lift them on to the next covert on spec of their fox having gone there, as hard as he can go, unless he wants himself and hounds to be ridden over; and then we cry out, "The hound has lost his nose!" because he does not do what he has never been asked or taught to do. But watch the relations of these same hounds in Devon or any other rough country, where the huntsman cannot get to them, and they are consequently taught to rely on themselves, you will see that the fox-hound of the present day can hunt as low a scent as could any of his forefathers. I do not say that he would puzzle out a track over dry ground like a bloodhound, because it is not in his nature to do so. But this arises from fire and impetuosity, not from want of olfactory powers. If he stooped to a scent like the bloodhound, he may walk a fox to death, but he would never hunt and kill him in the style which alone gives zest to the sport of fox-hunting, where "short, sharp, and decisive" should always be the motto.

CHAPTER VIII.

FOX-HUNTING.

When Cheerfulness, a nymph of healthiest hue,
  Her bow across her shoulder flung,
Her buskins gemm'd with morning dew
  Blew an inspiring air, that dale and thicket rung,
The hunter's call, to faun and dryad known;
  The oak-crown'd sisters and their chaste-eyed queen,
Satyrs and sylvan boys were seen
  Peeping from forth their alleys green;
Brown Exercise rejoiced to hear,
  And Sport leaped up and seized his beechen spear.

FOX-HUNTING! what a thrill the word sends through our souls as we think of the many happy days already spent in its pursuit, and look forward with joyful anticipation to the many more that we hope to spend! Truly, fox-hunting is, after all, *the* sport of the English nation. Its votaries may say what they like for racing, and extol it to the skies as the amusement of the many; but, from prince to peasant, hunting appeals to an Englishman's heart and feelings in a way that nothing else can. Let any one who doubts this attend a meeting of the Quorn, on the Nottingham side of the country, or the Pytchley, at Long Buckby, and see how the stockingmakers and shoemakers patronize it—how happy they are in an Englishman's privilege to shout to his heart's content as long as lungs will bear the strain, and note how long that strain can be borne. Talk of the English as a consumptive nation, except in the matter of beer—bah! their lungs must be as strong and stout as the leathern aprons they wear ever to

stand the strain put upon them on such occasions. By the way, there is another sight well worth seeing when a move is made from Long Buckby to Vanderplanks, and a fox breaks in the direction of Watford Gorse, which is the energy with which the shoemakers charge the Long Buckby brook, and the more than equal energy with which the hard-riding Pytchley men avoid it, and seek the bridge defended by that gate which it is a sin of deepest dye to miss as you pass through, and let back in the next comer's face, for verily to open it again is a work requiring the combined strength and skill of Hercules and Archimedes. Neither can the unlucky wight who finds his passage barred look for help from the infantry division, unless the scarlet-coated runner should haply turn up in the nick of time, for the sons of St. Crispin would be far more likely to tell him to jump the brook as they did than straighten his road by opening the gate. On the whole, though, they behave wonderfully well, and do far less towards spoiling sport than may be imagined, when treated by the master with a little good temper and courtesy. By the way, too, their hunting must be all pleasure, for no visions of a call for subscriptions cross their dreams, a frost brings no prospect of horses eating their heads off. I am quite willing to admit that a Northampton or Newcastle race-meeting may show a much larger number of "the people," as the Liberal organs now call those whose expenditure for soap is of the smallest, on any given day or days; but we must remember that these festivals come only once or, at most, twice a year, while one or two days a week, from November to March, are regularly given up by these sons of toil for a bit of fox-hunting, though they can only see the start with any certainty, and trust to providence and a good pair of legs for catching a glimpse (often no more than a bird's-eye view) of what is going forward during the remainder of the day. Again, see how, as you ride to covert or return home, every small urchin is anxious to know where the hounds meet, or if you have killed; and even the old woman at the turnpike-gate likes

to hear what has been done. But it is to a different class—the class that, as a reporter of a daily paper once said to me, "straddles a horse and rides"—that fox-hunting appeals most strongly, and, with all honour to England be it said, it matters not whether it is the tradesman, who can get his one day a week on the nag which takes out his goods, the farmer, who has a promising young one in his stables, the professional man, who steals an hour or two when he can from his business, or the nobleman or millionaire, with his stud of five and twenty fliers —one and all are fond of fox-hunting, and regard it as the *ne plus ultra* of earthly enjoyment. I believe the true reason of this is, as Beckford's friend said, because in fox-hunting "you can ride harder and do less harm" than in any other kind of sport. Probably he had never seen a deer turned out, or ridden a drag, or he would have altered his opinion; but he was certainly right in what I may term natural sport. Take an average of days, and you may gallop faster and jump more fences with fox-hounds than with anything else, and do less mischief. Moreover, it has the advantage of being easily accessible to all. The fox is so well preserved now, and packs of hounds have so increased, that it is hard to find the man, let his tent be pitched where it may, who cannot get his two or three days a week without much trouble or going long journeys. Moreover, he can go out and have his gallop, return home again, and earn a great deal of real enjoyment without knowing or caring anything about hunting. If he will only hold his tongue, and has wit enough to pull up when well-known men do so, he may hunt all his life without its ever being detected that he is not a veritable Solon in Venerie. With either wild deer or hare, the proceedings are apt to become at times slow and uninteresting to any one (even when good sport is shown) who has not some knowledge of hounds and woodcraft; but with fox-hounds, where the huntsman is a quick one and foxes plentiful, most have enough to do without troubling their heads about either fox or hounds.

On the other hand, to the thorough sportsman the chase of the fox has everything to commend it, for while there is a vigour and a dash connected with it, which no other kind of hunting can show in the same perfection, there is scope for the display of all the tenderness of nose which a hound is capable of exhibiting, and that judgment in noting and taking advantage of all circumstances which are likely to influence the run of his game, which so strongly distinguishes the scientific huntsman from the man who merely carries a horn. In fact, it is this combination of canine sagacity and human intellect which renders the chase of the fox such a fascinating pursuit. He has sufficient boldness to render a certain amount of dash and decision absolutely necessary to cope with him; for, as Sir Richard Sutton said, "A fox is a very quick animal, and if you do not make haste after him at some part of the day, you will not catch him." And at the same time he has sufficient cunning—though in this respect he is, I believe, inferior to both stag and hare—to call forth great powers of reflection on the part of the huntsman, and close hunting on that of the hounds. In every respect fox-hunting is essentially English, for in no part of the world can anything like it be seen save on our own shores. It has a rough and ready character about it which appeals strongly to the nature of every Briton, but which finds small response in those countries where sport, such as it is, is carried out with a vast amount of pomp and ceremony. At the covert-side, Jack is as good as his master, and the tenant farmer, if he has nerves and horseflesh of the right sort, when hounds run, as great a man as the lord of thousands of acres. Here no distinction is known, save that of the best hand, eye, and seat, and no favour shown to gentle or simple when hounds break covert. "Take the lead, and keep it if you can," is the order of the day; and, for all that those in front care, a certain personage not named to ears polite may take the hindmost, were he the greatest in the land. With good men and true, the only consideration is to allow hounds and huntsman plenty of room, so that sport shall

not be spoilt, and then every one for himself. As Charles the Tenth of France said, Englishmen excel in that chase which consists in following an animal "over mountain and vale, through woods and rivers, over hedges, gates, and walls, and killing him a short distance from where he was found," rather than in those more subtle arts of venerie which perhaps were more appreciated in former ages than at present. In fact, the Briton loves to "drink delight of battle with his peers," not in a jealous, envying spirit, but in a generous rivalry to see who is the better man to do and dare; and the nature of the fox gives him the best opportunity to throw down the gage of battle in his pursuit. To be effective, a run in which men meet for the dual object of seeing sport and having a friendly "set at each other," must be short, sharp, and decisive; it must include a certain amount of difficulties to be overcome, and at the same time take place over an arena which affords fair going to a bold rider and a good horse. All these requirements fox-hunting combines in a degree unknown to any other chase. The fox, on an average, runs just about long enough to tax the powers of man and horse sufficiently for pleasure, without overdoing them, and it is only at intervals that we hear of Billesdon Coplow, Waterloo, or Greatwood runs taking place, to startle the hunting world out of its propriety, and frighten men who ride for sale, as well as those with short studs, for a month to come. But it is just the uncertainty when such a tickler may occur that constitutes the charm; and there is scarcely a man, save and except those who avowedly go out to coffee-houses, that does not, as he pulls on his boots of a morning, think that it may be for the "coming day," when, perchance, only a chosen few—he being, of course, amongst them—will be able to live on to the end of what I have heard termed an "historical run." There is not, perhaps, much pleasure in these, and a really good five and twenty minutes, which the renowned Frank Holyoake put as the limit of pleasure in a fox-chase, is rather longer than most men and horses can conveniently go, if the pace is severe;

yet there is always the hope of struggling on into the select few who alone are left at the end of these great performances. Herein fox-hunting has a charm which deer-hunting (turned out) and the drag can never know—that of uncertainty; because, when a deer has been once hunted, you can give a very shrewd guess how far he will go on a certain amount of law, as well as the line he will take. Of course, with a drag, all this is cut and dried, and so the only two kinds of chase which could compete with fox-hunting as a trial of capability in crossing a country lose that charm which lends the greatest zest to all sport. Another great advantage I must claim for fox-hunting is that it is essentially a product and outcome of civilization. In fact, until forests were broken up and the land became open and cultivated, hunting, as now carried out, was impossible. As the forests were stubbed, and heaths enclosed, the fox gradually but surely came to the front as a beast of chase, and, so far, has held his own in the most highly cultivated districts. What effect the extension of steam-cultivation may have on the sport is another matter. I only speak of the case as it stands at present. One result of its general adoption will certainly be to give hounds more room in the plough countries—a fact at which real lovers of hunting will not feel unmitigated sorrow, even should they not be able to go quite as straight as in former days. It has been my lot to hunt in countries of all sorts and kinds, and much as I have enjoyed myself with fox-hounds in wild, forest-like districts, I must admit that for a continuation the more civilized localities certainly have the advantage, and no small one is it, that on a short winter's day you know where to go to find your game at once. In an open, heathy country, interspersed with bogs and gorse patches, a fox is as likely to lie in one place as another, and you may, unless a tender-nosed hound chances to hit on his drag, draw miles and yet leave your fox behind you at last. Hence long draws in such places often occur; and there is also another consideration, which is, that when your fox is found he has no par-

ticular point to run to, being equally at home on all sides, and, of course, has not the inducement to make any determinate point. Of course good runs do occur in wild countries when a fox is found far from home, and makes up his mind to reach it, and carries out the old verse,—

> A stranger, a traveller, stout, gallant, and shy,
> With his earths ten miles off, and those earths in his eye.

Then, as the scent is, as a rule, good in such localties, there is a clipper in store for you, and it behoves the man who means to see him pulled down carefully to nurse his horse and keep down wind of the pack; but the inducements for a fox to run straight are certainly not nearly so great as in a country where he knows he can only find shelter in some covert a few miles away. On the other hand, if he makes a point, there are fewer obstacles to turn him from it; but I believe with the Rev. J. Russell, that you can head no animal living, for if he cannot make his point good at one place, he will at another. There is a drawback beyond that of mere sport to hunting in a wild country, which, with half the men who meet hounds, will, I am sure, be thought well worthy of consideration, which is the unpleasantness of riding home by twilight over a wild, houseless, uncultivated tract during the dark, dreary winter months. At the same time I must say that in such countries I have enjoyed the chase exceedingly, both in spring and autumn, one advantage of moorland districts being that you can commence cub-hunting as soon as you like, and may also keep on in spring as long as the weather will allow.

This leads me to consider another great advantage of fox-hunting, which is, that it can be obtained more universally, and in a greater state of perfection, than any other sport. The nature of the country it is pursued in has less influence on it; and although I do not for a moment compare a good run over plough with a good one on the grass, and I know that, as a rule, hunting in a heavily-wooded country is a different thing to hunting with the Quorn or Pytchley, yet it is

certain that good runs do occur in all countries, and also that men enjoy them.

I contend that this can be said of no other sport, although it has been averred that hare-hunting comes more within the reach of the many than fox-hunting. In my opinion, hare-hunting depends far more on the country where it is pursued than the chase of the fox. First, hares in enclosed countries run short and badly, and, secondly, men, as a rule, do not care to keep riding round and round in the same track all day, over strong fences, and find that those who have been standing still, or trotted slowly about, have had the best of them. In such countries the chase of the hare must descend to hunting with foot-beagles. Again, much wood is a certain stoppage to hare-hunting, or at least any enjoyment in it; and, although I do not contend that it is an improvement to fox-hunting, I can say that it by no means stops it altogether; and, from the immense woods of Devon, Hants, and other countries, I have myself seen many a good run. Indeed, it is a notorious fact that woodland foxes, when you can once get them to go, run stouter than those bred in the open. I shall show that hare-hunting, worth seeing, is only to be obtained in a certain description of country; wild stag-hunting, alas! only in one; but, save in the most mountainous districts, there is scarcely a place in England where a man cannot get fox-hunting from his own stable door, and that with the prospect of having a good run. I heard an ex-master say, when asked how he liked the part in which he had hunted the season before (a most unfashionable country), "Oh, very well; I got out nearly every day, and I prefer quantity to quality;" yet he had hunted a country some part of which is as fine as any in England. For the man who does not mind moving his household gods, fox-hunting again holds out an endless variety. You may hunt on grass one week, in plough country the next, and on open down land the third, if so minded. Every taste can be suited in it. There are walls and upland hills for such as like them—and very pleasant hunt-

ing, I can answer for it, they afford. There are open plough lands, with easy fences and large fields, that hounds can race across, such as the wolds of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire; deep countries, with banks and ditches, for those who like plenty of jumping, of not too severe a character; and, lastly, the shires for men who have deep pockets, large studs, and plenty of nerve, or who hunt for show and fashion sake. There is also a geniality about fox-hunting that to me seems wanting in almost every other kind of chase. It is so cosmopolitan, and every one, as long as he behaves like a gentleman and sportsman, is welcome. As a rule, with harriers, there is a certain set in the field all known to each other, and a stranger going out, although he is sure to be treated courteously, often feels himself, as it were, one alone in the midst of a family party. That perhaps arises in a great measure from the different nature of the pursuit; but in fox-hunting it is not so, especially in the better countries. There is a cheerfulness and dash about the whole thing that disposes every one to be jolly and sociable; and a stranger, especially if he goes pretty well, soon finds himself at ease with those around him, and it is not many times that he will have a solitary and cheerless ride to covert or home again. There must be no pottering with the fox-hound, more than with the pointer; 'tis the dash of the fox-hound, as Beckford said, that distinguishes him, and this spirit seems to be infused into all those that follow him. I should say it is no more possible for a really melancholy man to be fond of fox-hunting than for a miser to be generous. I never remember to have seen more than one, who may be really termed a hunting man, who ever looked melancholy; and dull indeed must he be who does not cheer up at the sight of a meet of fox-hounds. Truly has Somerville described it, when he says,—

> Delightful scene,
> Where all around is gay—men, horses, dogs—
> And in each smiling countenance appears
> Fresh-blooming health, and universal joy.

I now come to my last argument, though by no means the least important one, in favour of fox-hunting, which is the good it does to those countries wherein it takes place. A writer in "Baily," June, 1866, puts the total expense at a three-day-a-week country at 1348*l.* 14*s* The Earl of Wilton, in "Sports and Pursuits of the English," allows 1190*l.* for a two-day-a-week pack, 1625*l.* for three days a week, and 1936*l.* for four days a week, with an estimate of 300*l.* per annum more if a huntsman is kept; and it must be borne in mind that all of these calculations were made some years ago, and probably the estimates would be found below the mark in the present day; but, even taking it at that, and placing the recognized packs in England at something like one hundred and forty, exclusive of those in Ireland and Scotland, we see what an immense amount of money is put into circulation by the kennels alone. If we also reckon the fields with each at a hundred and fifty, and allow an average of four days a week, which I think will not be found over the mark, it is easy to realize the assertion that the fox causes a million a year to be spent in England; and there can be no doubt that, wherever a pack of hounds is established, it is a great and substantial benefit to the country—a benefit in which all join, farmers, tradesmen, and labourers, as well in increased prosperity as in healthy recreation and amusement. I cannot conclude my remarks on fox-hunting without alluding to that admirable institution, "The Hunt Servants' Benefit Society," which will be a lasting memorial of the kind-heartedness and good-nature of many of those ladies and gentlemen who not only take an interest in the chase but in the welfare of a Society which encourages providential habits and relieves the servants in cases of accident, old age, or infirmity. At the same time, bearing in mind what I have just written concerning the numbers who every day during the season go out with hounds, I am bound to confess that the list of subscribers is not nearly so large as it ought to be, and there are a great number who, while enjoying the sport, grudge a trifle for the help of

those who labour for their amusement when in sickness or distress. Many, no doubt, have passed it by on the other side from thoughtlessness or carelessness; but, should any amongst them do me the honour to peruse this work, I hope what I have said will induce them to become subscribers at once.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BROCKLESBY.

Hark to the cheering note! They've found him, see!
The gorse is waving like a troubled sea;
He's gone away; hark, halloo! to the cry!
Like swallows skimming o'er the fields they fly.
"Give them a moment"—"Hold hard, sir, pray;
You'll stop his pulling ere we've done to-day."
Look at the gallant pack! away they sweep!
The pace is killing, and the country deep.

Of the packs of England, as far as I have been able to ascertain, there are none to be found of more ancient date than the Brocklesby; hence I will give them precedence amongst those of which I propose to lay a short history before my readers. Other considerations also induce me to give them the preference, for no pack has done more in sustaining the excellence of our fox-hound blood, or attained greater celebrity, than the hounds of the Earl of Yarborough—established as long ago as 1713, when Mr. Pelham, Sir John Tyrwhitt of Stanfield, and Mr. Vyner, on the 20th of April, entered into the following agreement:—

"It is agreed that the fox-hounds now kept by Sir John Tyrwhitt, and the hounds now kept by the said Mr. Pelham, shall be joined in one pack, and each of them—the said Sir John Tyrwhitt, Robert Vyner, and Charles Pelham—to have an equal share and interest in the said pack."

This arrangement lasted for five years, and a fine wild country

the confederates must have had to hunt over, for the wolds were at that time, for the most part, unbroken; and I have heard that, where all is now fenced and enclosed, at that time there were not more than three fences in the country. This perhaps is a little exaggeration, but no doubt they were few and far between. By the way, from what is said in that agreement, it is very evident that *fox-hounds* were kept before that time, and I know records are extant now of the hounds in the Brocklesby kennel as early as 1710. The pack, after the amalgamation, only consisted of sixteen couple of hounds and three horses, with a huntsman and a boy; and I have very little doubt that at the expiration of the five years the whole concern reverted to the hands of Mr. Pelham. In 1746 a regular list of puppies sent to walk was kept, with the names of those who took them in, and this list I have seen at the huntsman's house. The first Lord Yarborough, we read, kept the kennel stud-book in his own handwriting. In "Country Quarters," in "Baily's Magazine" for February, 1871, I wrote the following account of the Brocklesby :—

"There is little doubt but these hounds have been kept as a pack in the Pelham family for quite a hundred and fifty years. Moreover, the Smith family have hunted them for almost as long a period, the office descending from father to son without any intermission, one of them (Will Smith) being killed by a fall at a trumpery little fence in the year 1845; and at the place where he fell a tablet has been erected by Mr. Nainby of Bartnaby-le-Wold, to whose house he was taken after the accident."

A first-rate sportsman, who knew Will Smith and the Brocklesby country, thus writes concerning him :—

"The palmy days of the Brocklesby country were in the grandfather's day to the commencement of the late earl. Mr. W. Smith was huntsman, and the man to whom the hounds owe their renown and fame. He was an excellent servant in the field and the kennel. Well did he know how to breed,

feed, and hunt a pack of hounds. He was a person highly educated, and a gentleman in manners, a good horseman, universally liked, rode well, and was followed for years by the finest tenantry in England—all horsemen, all fox preservers, and all good fellows. In 1816, Lord Yarborough gave up the hounds to his son, and at his request his old huntsman, Thomas Smith, also resigned the horn to his son William, who, for the last two seasons, had generally hunted the hounds, although the old man at seventy-two rode as hard as ever. On this occasion his lordship presented the old man with a handsome silver cup, which was given by his grandson, Master Pelham, afterwards second Earl of Yarborough."

"The late Lord Yarborough, who was a great agriculturist, very active in the House of Commons, and a great yachtsman, died in 1862; and about that time W. Smith, who had been in Ireland, resigned the post of huntsman after its being in the family for something like one hundred and fifty years, and took a farm on the estate; so that Lord Yarborough, who, when asked where he got such good tenants from, replied that he bred them, might have added that he bred his huntsmen also. Philip Tocock, from the Surrey Union, held the post a very short time; and Tom Smith, who resigned from ill-health, preceded Nimrod Long, from Mr. Scratton's in Essex, and has well kept up the reputation of the pack."

As a hunting country the Brocklesby is certainly unique, and perhaps an exact counterpart of it is to be found in no other county in England. Situated in the north of Lincolnshire, it is bounded by the sea and the river Humber, the Burton, and the South Wold countries, Lord Galway's joining them for a little space on the east side. All the portions of it that I have seen are thinly inhabited, and wild in the extreme, so that, in one sense, it is exceedingly favourable to fox-hunting. There are also large woodlands about Brocklesby and Limber which will stand any amount of cub-hunting, and which can boast such ridings as could nowhere else be seen save in Rockingham

Forest and Geddington Chase, in the Pytchley country, and in the remains of Merry Sherwood in Nottinghamshire. In fact, so good are the ridings that they have successfully been used as training ground, and more than one Grand National winner has taken his breathings in the neighbourhood of Limber. It is, however, in a hunting sense that they are remarkable, as here young hounds can be got to work in early autumn, let the ground be as hard as it may; and I know of no prettier sight than to see them rattle a cub about these beautiful woodlands. I have alluded to one excellence of the country, *id est*, the thin population; but I must admit that there are drawbacks, and that the springy, elastic turf, over which those who hunt in the Midlands are wont to ride, is almost, if not altogether, wanting. On the other hand, in those parts called the Wolds, at any rate, the enclosures are large, the ploughs ride light, and the fences are generally of a description that a blood-like, reaching horse, which you must have to live with these hounds, can take them in his stride. Here, as far as my experience goes, the coverts are not large as a rule; but some of them are exceedingly thick, being well supplied with what in the south of England are known as "lawyers" (Anglicè, brambles), which interfere very much with hounds. The low parts of the country are divided by big drains of the sort which are to be met with in Holderness; and as the ground is deep and nearly all plough, I need not add that they take more than an ordinary amount of getting over. In fact, this is a deceiving country to a man who is not well horsed, or whose nerve is not quite in the right place, unless he knows every inch of it; for, after going in comparative ease and comfort for a time over light fences, he will, perchance, sink a bottom, to find there is a drain, ditch, brook, or whatever he may choose to call it, that must be jumped clean and clear, if he is to keep his place with hounds, and, moreover, that it requires a hunter to do it.

In the low parts I have spoken of, these come at such short intervals, that a nervous man would have anything but a

pleasant time in riding over it, unless he had a pilot very well up in local geography. There is also another part which I have scarcely seen, having been only on the borders of it, consisting of low meadows or marshes, all grass, and divided by drains and cuttings of considerable width and perfectly fabulous depth. The only time I was ever near this part, Nimrod Long said as a caution, "If you get your horse into one of the drains, you will never get him out again alive." My answer was, "That is merely a question of my being able to hold him; unless he runs away with me, I can answer for his not getting in."

Fortunately hounds do not often run over this part, and when they do, it is generally a case of having it pretty much to themselves, as few attempt to ride to them. Such things, however, have been done, and, unless I am much mistaken, there is a small picture in the smoking-room at Brocklesby, representing one of the Smith family (I fancy it is the one who was afterwards killed in the hunting-field) sailing along alone in his glory, in a good run which occurred over these same marshes, when he was the only man near the hounds. It is not so much the country they hunt as the whole turn-out which so forcibly strikes a stranger on first meeting the Brocklesby. There is a sportsman-like character in the whole thing, a total absence of the patent leather and nosegay element, which tells you at once that every man comes out to hunt, and not for the sake of showing his boots and breeches. The late Earl of Yarborough, from want of health and other causes, was not a constant attendant in the field, although, from what I have seen of him on the flags, I incline to the opinion that he took great interest in keeping up the character and efficiency of what may be termed an hereditary pack, while, from remarks that fell from him in selecting and drafting the entry, it was evident that he was quite *au fait* as to the qualifications necessary to make a high-class fox-hound.

The Countess of Yarborough was (I believe I may write still

is) quite an enthusiast in the matter of hunting, never missing a meet if she can possibly avoid it, and, when hounds run, she can hold her own either across the wolds or amongst the big drains of the low country; and many as are the ladies I have in my time seen going to hounds, I have met few, or none, who could have held their own with her, as she not only rides boldly, but appears to have an instinctive knowledge of how a country should be crossed, as well as the run of a fox, and is thus able to make the most of her horse. Very many ladies ride boldly, and, when well piloted, will allow no fence to turn them; but those who can select their own line, and know what hounds are doing and when to ride, are few and far between. I have spoken of the Brocklesby as one of the foundation stones of the modern fox-hound. No less celebrated is Lincolnshire altogether, and especially this portion of it, for producing hunters, and many a good one has first drawn breath on the wolds. The grey Peter Simple, who won such world-wide fame, came, I believe, from the Brocklesby country; and the no less celebrated Gay Lad was foaled in a village near Market Rasen, just on the borders of the Burton country, and, ridden for the most part by Captain Skipworth, earned his first laurels in the home circuit. His breeder and first owner, Mr. Davey, was a very tall, heavy man, and once, having occasion to ride him himself somewhat unexpectedly, did without food or sleep for three days to reduce himself to the weight; and, although I have heard, I am afraid to trust my memory to show how much he lowered himself in the time. I know it was almost incredible, and, had I not heard it from his own lips, I could not have believed it possible. They are a race not easily to be turned from their purpose, these same Lincolnshire farmers, and I verily believe that such a hard-riding lot of men is to be found in no country in the world as they are, for, although the Melton men go as hard as it is possible to go, it must be remembered that they are generally on the picked hunters of the world—the most clever and the best horses that

money can buy—whereas a great portion of the Lincolnshire farmers are on young raw horses learning their business, and requiring plenty of pluck and horsemanship to make them hold their place in a run without coming on their heads and rolling their riders in the mud. In no county is the practice so universal of *making* horses as in Lincolnshire, especially this side of it; and there is scarcely a farmer to be found who has not two or three promising young horses in his stable that will, as their education becomes complete, be passed on, and their places supplied by more young ones. I fancy so many are not now bred in the country as formerly, but there are a few still produced, and many of the landlords keep a good sire for the use of their tenants and neighbours. When I was last at Brocklesby, they had two or three there, and Mr. Heneage, of Hainton, in the South Wold country, generally has a useful one. Talking of breeding, I may here correct an error in regard to the celebrated Lottery, no doubt the best horse that ever ran over a county. It was generally supposed, and has been often stated that he was bred by Mr. Jackson, of Whitecross, near Beverley, in the Holderness country. It was not so, however, as a Dr. Jackson bred him at Stamford, in Lincolnshire, and gave him, when very young, to his nephew Mr. Jackson—hence the mistake.

The stables at Brocklesby are always well supplied, as may be imagined, with good class horses; and not a few that have gone there as cub-hunters have been picked up at the annual sales and afterwards become hunters of note; a fact that will give some idea of the way the men are mounted in the regular season. The stables themselves are quite a sight, and it is a great treat to a sportsman to walk round them on a winter's evening, when the gas is lighted. Since Lord Yarborough's death, Nimrod Long has left, and the present huntsman is Alfred Thatcher, who was for many years first whip there, and then went to hunt the Bedale. No fitter man could have been found as Long's successor, as, in addition to the character he has earned with hounds, he knows

every inch of the country. I once, when hunting with these hounds, saw a very curious thing happen. We were in some large woods, of which I now forget the name, and found a ringing fox, which refused to leave the covert, or at most would go a field or two and return; the second whip, on one of these occasions, hit at him with his whip to turn him, when the lash twisted round his neck, and he was tossed in the air and literally hanged, and the hounds, being close on his brush, caught him almost as he came down.

CHAPTER X.

THE BELVOIR HOUNDS.

His rush-grown tail
O'er his broad back bends in an ample arch.
On shoulders clean, upright and trim he stands;
His round cat-foot, straight hams, and widespread thighs,
And his low-drooping chest, confess his speed;
His strength, his wind, or on the steepy hill
Or far extended plain; in every part
So well proportion'd, that the nicer skill
Of Phidias himself can't blame thy choice.
Of such compose thy pack.

HAVING discussed the Brocklesby as the oldest pack now in existence, I may turn to the Belvoir (the Duke of Rutland's) as decidedly at the present day the most fashionable; for where is the man possessing a pack of fox-hounds who does not try for a bit of Belvoir blood? In fact, it is as hard to get away from in fox-hounds as that of Waxy amongst race-horses; and there are few who will not admit that a dip into it has been of great service to them.

When these first came into existence as a pack of fox-hounds, it is impossible to say; but I believe no authentic record of them can be traced beyond the date of 1730, and the kennel records, traced through the late Will Goodall's care and research, principally reach about 1750. Thus it will be seen that their annals are later by some years than those of the Brocklesby; but they appear to have sprung into fame almost at a bound; and the exchange of courtesies, as regards

sires, between these two celebrated kennels, has been almost continual, so that their blood must be looked upon as nearly identical. Neither is there much difference in the style of hound bred, though at Belvoir they have selected a rather smaller standard, rejecting any dog-hound which exceeded twenty-three inches, at least in any noticeable degree, while at Brocklesby the more usual standard of twenty-four inches has been the limit. Another peculiarity at the Duke of Rutland's is that they have been very particular with regard to colour, adhering to a rich black, white, and tan, the latter colour somewhat predominating, so that "the Belvoir tan" has passed into a recognized colour amongst fox-hounds; and assuredly a very rich and gay colour it is, though no one with less means for breeding and walking puppies than Belvoir supplies could afford to draft for it to such an extent as has there been done, however, I am free to admit that I have sometimes seen a hound on the flags there who was not quite of the orthodox colour, but then he was in other respects too perfect to part with. This colour is said to have been derived from a draft they had from Lord Monson.

There is yet another peculiarity of this pack, first introduced, I believe, in Lord Forester's time (when he had the management), which is the great perfection to which they bring the form of their legs and feet; so that often, in looking over a young hound in other kennels, a remark as to a slight deficiency in those important parts has been met by the huntsman with—"Well, there's not much the matter, sir, but perhaps he would not quite do at Belvoir."[1]

Whether other points quite as important have not been sacrificed at times to obtain the colour and the legs and feet, is

[1] It is a well-known fact that Osbaldeston's celebrated hound Furrier was a draft from Belvoir; and he was by no means so good on his legs as he should have been; so that the squire, when any one wanted to view him in front, would squeak out, "Not that way! not that way! look at him sideways."

a question. No one ever had a perfect hound or horse; and if we stick rigidly to one point in anything, we are bound to sacrifice others. I have heard it mooted that the Belvoir are in many instances not quite so perfect in their shoulders as some packs, and that a little more music would do them no harm. Nevertheless, at the present day, hound-breeders must, and do, take them as one of the corner-stones of the temple, and the polished shafts as well.

The country is an extensive one, situated on the borders of Lincolnshire and Leicestershire, Belvoir Castle and the kennels being in Leicestershire, but as near as possible in the division between the two, though we must undoubtedly look upon Lincolnshire as the original home and nursery of the modern fox-hound. In character it is very varied, the Vale of Belvoir stretching away from the castle towards Nottingham, being of a holding, deep, and stiff character, so that nothing but the very best of hunters can cross it; and I have heard on good authority that one of the finest and boldest riders Melton ever sent forth has totally declined to go down into its deep clays.

Another thing I have heard:—A man came from the other side of Leicestershire to Grantham with his horses, and hunted some few days in the lighter parts of the country, which I shall presently endeavour to describe; but was constantly saying he could find nothing worth riding over.

Presently he went to a meet in the vale; the hounds found and went away; the regular Belvoir men, knowing their way about, stuck to a green lane. This thruster, like the honorary obligation division in "Ask Mamma," thought it incumbent on him to go without deviation on the track of the hounds. The first opportunity he turned from the lane through a gate into a field; but, alas! the fence was not to his liking. He had found more to jump than he wanted; and, having ridden dolefully round the enclosure to seek an exit, and finding none, returned to the gate by which he entered, greatly to the amusement of all who saw the incident. That evening

his stalls at Grantham were vacant. All who have hunted in the vale, which Assheton Smith loved so well, will easily conceive how probable such an incident would be, for the ground is heavy, and the fences raspers. Yet, as late as 1790, this vale was for the most part unenclosed, and the woods inhabited by deer. Another portion, which lies rather more south-east, is called the heath country; and a very pleasant one it is to ride over, being light arable land, divided by easy thorn fences, generally without a ditch, though you must be prepared even here to face a big place occasionally.

The great meet for this country is "The Three Queens," and most of the Melton men are to be found there, when the fixture is announced. There is some of a like nature about Cranston, farther north, where you meet with stone walls, and some very heavy country on the Sleaford side, where the hounds have kennels at Ropsley, and sleep out once a week. The grass country is towards Melton, and I have seen them go well from Burbage's covert, a very little distance from the town; and Melton Spinney, from which, go which way you will, there is a brook to be got over. The grass parts of the country are hilly, and certainly not to be compared to other parts of Leicestershire that I have seen; but, as old Dick Christian said, "It's the hounds and the men, not the country, which brings them here."

Round Belvoir there are some magnificent woods for cub-hunting; and, take it all in all, though it may not rank with the Quorn or Pytchley, there are very few better countries in England. The horror of the Meltonians at its deep clays has been most happily hit off in a poem circulated privately some few years ago, and written by one who has ever been well able to hold his own across them, in "A Legende of Merrie Croxton:"—

> Long would it take my humble muse
> To tell the varied chaff,
> How Melton swells the ploughs abuse,
> How Belvoir "ploughmen" laugh.

And again,—

> "Pray, George," cries Wilton, "head the beast
> From facing that deep clay;"
> He hears not, heeds not in the least,
> But blows his horn—"Away!"

Although these hounds have always been in the possession of the Rutland family, from time to time other persons have been installed as masters *pro tem.*, when occasion required, and towards the latter end of the last century we find Lord George Cavendish, a son of the fourth Duke of Devonshire, and Sir Carnaby Haggerstone thus acted during the duke's minority. Mr. Percival, of Croxton Park, where the kennels then were, succeeded them—a fine old sportsman, and a brother of Mr. Percival who was shot in the House of Commons. He afterwards lived at Willoughby Hall, Ancaster. The duke took them himself about 1799 or 1800, and the first huntsman of whom there is any record was Woods, who had hunted Major Gilbert's hounds in the New Forest, and I believe was a Hampshire man. Newman then came and hunted them from 1794 to 1805, and had a man named Fox as his whip. He was succeeded by "Gentleman Shaw," from Sir Thomas Mostyn's, not only a wonderfully fine horseman and a good huntsman, but so noted for his courtesy and urbanity in the field that he obtained the above title. He held the post until 1816, when he was succeeded by Goosey, who first went to these hounds in 1796, and only relinquished the horn at Belvoir in 1842, after having been connected with that pack for a period of forty-eight years. He was a fine, powerful horseman, a capital huntsman, and a great judge of hound-breeding, wherein he was much assisted by Lord Forester, who took the command in 1829; and, during the time he and Goosey had the management, the pack were brought to a greater state of perfection than they had ever yet attained.

I think it may be said of them what can be told of scarcely

any other that has ever existed, which is, that from the time of its first institution up to the present date three times, and three times only, have drafts been sought from other packs, viz., in 1798, fifteen couple came from Lord Carlisle; in 1810, ten couple from Mr. George Templer of Stover, in Devon; and, 1817, seven couple from Mr. Pelham. Herein, I have no doubt, lay the immense superiority to which they have attained. In the first place, being enabled to keep up the family likeness, and, as it were, to know the distinguishing characteristics of each strain of blood in the kennel; and, in the next, putting no second-class hounds forward, which drafts, except by accident, or the want of judgment in those who turn them out, must be, although we know that, from being backward at the time the selection was made, or other causes, some perfect gems have at times been sent away in a draft which no money could redeem to the original pack. On the other hand, all the best kennels were ransacked for sires, and earliest in the list we find young ones whose paternal ancestry traces to the strains of Brocklesby, Lord Monson's, and Mr. Meynell's. Later on they went to Lord Lonsdale, Sir Tatton Sykes, and Mr. Osbaldeston, and about 1844 or 1845 dipped pretty deeply into the Badminton blood; but, why or wherefore I cannot say, celebrated as Mr. Foljambe's pack was, Goosey appears to have held aloof from the Grove. The greatest kennel hit was, however, made in Will Goodall's time, who took the horn on Goosey's retirement, to whom, with Tom Flint, he had turned the hounds for some years. This was when he obtained the celebrated Ralleywood from Smith, of Brocklesby, in exchange for Raglan, about the year 1850. Ralleywood was by Basilisk out of Rosebud, and Goodall said of him that he was "a beautiful little short-legged dog, exceedingly light of bone, but with beautiful legs and feet;" that "he was one of the best-bred hounds in the Brocklesby kennel, and that Rosebud, his dam, worked up until she was ten years old, and was never known to do anything wrong;" and, moreover, he said of the sort, "they are perfection in their work, and everlasting."

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We have seen a portrait of this celebrated hound at Brocklesby, which is now unfortunately burnt all but the head, and can quite endorse Will's dictum that he was "a beautiful little short-legged dog," and it was a great day for Belvoir when he crossed Lincolnshire to the duke's kennels, for even at the present day Frank Gillard, who knows what is what as well as any one, swears by the sort.

The late Will Goodall ranked quite in the first class as a huntsman, and probably no man ever earned a higher or better-merited reputation in the vocation. He stood very high in the estimation of Lord Henry Bentinck, certainly *the* best judge of hunting matters of his day. He said of him,—

"Goodall's chief aim was to get the hearts of his hounds. He considered hounds should be treated like women—that they would not bear to be *bullied*, to be *deceived*, or *neglected* with impunity. For this end he would not meddle with them in their casts until they had done trying for themselves, and *felt the want of him.* He paid them the compliment of going to *fetch them;* he never deceived or neglected them; he was continually cheering and making much of his hounds. If he was compelled to disappoint them by roughly stopping them off a sucking bitch or a dying fox at dark, you would see him, as soon as he had got them stopped, jump off his horse, get into the middle of his pack, and spend ten minutes in making friends with them again. The result was, that the hounds were never happy without him, and when lost would drive up through any crowd of horsemen to get to him again, and it was very rare for a single hound to be left out" (*Baily's Magazine*, Feb., 1871).

If the huntsman was good, so was the master, Lord George Forester, who at this time had the management of the pack. He was as fine a judge of a hound as any man in England, and no better horseman ever crossed the Belvoir Vale, though he did not fall in with the popular Leicestershire notion as regards oversized horses, but liked a short-legged one, as well bred as he possibly could be got. Having taken the mastership because

the Duke of Rutland wished to reduce his number of hunting days in the week, unless a younger man would undertake the onerous duties, he was most enthusiastic in showing sport, and with sixty couple of hounds hunted five days a week. He never went home while daylight lasted, and Goodall, when asked by any one what o'clock it was, used to answer that he never carried a watch, as his lordship always drew until dark, and told with great unction the story of his once having jumped over the moon, which was true as far as the reflection of it was concerned, in the Melton Brook. Fortunate as was his lordship in commencing his mastership with such a man under him as Goosey, who was as good in the woodlands as in the open, perhaps such a pair as he and Will Goodall have seldom ever presided over a country and kennel together. At any rate, to find a parallel we must go to Assheton Smith and Dick Burton, or The Squire and Sebright.

In 1859 he retired, and the same year saw poor Will consigned to his grave. Lord Forester was presented with a silver statuette, representing a scene in which a fox was driven from a high bough in Croxton Park, gave them one of the fastest runs on record to Melton Spinney; and at the same time a handsome testimonial was presented to Goodall, which, alas! he was doomed not to live long to enjoy. James Cooper succeeded Goodall with the horn, and a more desperate horseman was never seen, though he certainly was not so successful with the hounds as his predecessor. He had served his apprenticeship under John Walker with the Fife. Shipherd was first whip, and Nimrod Long, late with the Brocklesby, was second.

Frank Gillard came as whip from the Hon. Mark Rolle in 1860, but went as huntsman to Mr. Musters seven years later, where he stayed until Mr. Musters resigned the Quorn country in 1870, when Cooper, having left the Duke of Rutland, he had the offer of the Belvoir horn, which he accepted, and has since held the post to the credit of himself

and the pack. His first whips were Will Goodall, a son of the celebrated Will, who is now hunting the Pytchley.

The duke himself has not been seen at the covert-side so often as his friends could wish, on account of ill-health, but is a sportsman to the back-bone, and nothing makes him so angry as to see a fox killed unfairly. Gillard once told me that they ran one to ground in a drain; he got hold of him, and, finding he was already dead, threw him amongst the hounds. "I thought the duke would have horsewhipped me," said he; "he was so angry until I explained that he was dead. He thought I wanted to kill him unfairly." That was when he was whip there.

CHAPTER XI.

THE QUORN.

Sad and fearful is the story
Of the hunt in Leicestershire;
On that fatal field of glory
Met full many a dashing squire.

If of later origin than Brocklesby and the Belvoir, the Quorn country certainly equals them in celebrity—a celebrity which is well merited, for, certainly to a man who has plenty of money, plenty of horses, and plenty of nerve, it is a veritable hunting paradise. The best parts of it are all grass, which, unless the season is very wet, rides light and springy; the coverts are for the most part small, so that there is little difficulty in getting a start, and the fences are as a rule jumpable; though I am fain to admit that, unless a man is very well horsed, and his heart quite in the right place, he will not be able to cope with them. There is also a wild district on the Derbyshire side, known as Charnwood Forest, which is first-rate for making and breaking young hounds, though the Melton men seldom or never venture there, as it is a rough, hilly country, with large coverts and stone walls, which are easily enough leaped, but dangerous to horses, as even the slightest cut takes a very long time to heal. I suppose there must be something in the nature of the stone here to cause this, as I have not heard of it in other wall countries. It was being in close proximity to Charnwood which caused Mr. Meynell to fix on Quorndon Hall as a residence, which he bought of Lord

Ferrers, in order that he may there work his young hounds in autumn, and this has, with a few intermissions, been the head-quarters of the Quorn ever since.

Charnwood Forest was, however, celebrated as a hunting country ages before Mr. Meynell, with his sixty couple of hounds, awoke its sylvan echoes, as we learn that the monks of Quorndon Abbey complained of one, John Comyns, killing a hundred wild hogs in the forest, that being more than his lawful due. A trial took place according to the Druidical laws, and the jury gave a verdict against the monks, after which the rights of the chase were divided. Comyns must have been a clever fellow to get over the priests in those days, and well deserved all the pork he got. Old Michael Drayton, in his "Poly Albion," thus speaks of sport within the bounds of Charnwood, and descants on its beauty:—

> O Charnwood! be thou call'd the choicest of thy kind,
> The like in any place what flood hath hapt to find?
> No tract in all this isle, the proudest let her be,
> Can show a sylvan nymph for beauty like to thee;
> The Sytars and the fauns, by Dian set to keep,
> Rough hills and forest holts were sadly seen to weep,
> When thy high palmèd harts, the sport of boors and hounds,
> By gripple borderers' hands were banished thy ground.

But we must return to the better country to be found on the other side of the Wreake, for all on the west of it is inferior to that on the east, and we may say that from Six Hills to the country hunted by Sir Bache Cunard is the cream, the Widmerpool side, beyond Six Hills, and adjoining the Belvoir Vale, being deep and stiff. Sir Bache Cunard's, which was part of the Quorn, is some of it very good indeed, but parts are almost unjumpable, so that the hardest men are at times forced to ride for gaps and gates; and I have heard one of the finest men I ever saw over a country complain of it on that account, though Assheton Smith said of it, "there was nothing you could not get over *with a fall.*" The first master of the Quorn was Hugo

Meynell, Esq., who hunted it from 1753 to 1800, and it is said his country extended from Clifton Gardens, near Nottingham, to Market Harborough. At that time the country was much wilder, and more open than at present, and save a large rough boundary-fence on the confines of a parish occasionally, hounds might run for a considerable distance with nothing to stop them. Neither were gorse coverts nearly so plentiful; the consequence was that runs were longer and wilder, though no doubt blank days were more frequent.

Mr. Meynell was a great houndsman, and his system has been little, if at all, improved on up to the present day. He did not hunt his own hounds, but entrusted the horn to Jack Raven, Skinner and Jones whipping in to him, and afterwards Joe Harrison. He strictly rode to hunt, and gave his pack plenty of room, but went very hard, and was determined to be with them. Of course he had the best hunters that money could buy, and scrupled not as to the price he gave for them. He sold one horse, South, barely exceeding fifteen hands in height, to Sir Harry Featherstonhaugh for 500 guineas, who afterwards exchanged him for the celebrated race-horse Surprise. Mr. Meynell had at no time more than three or four subscribers to his hounds, we learn from "The Noble Science," and at first only two, Lord R. Cavendish and Mr. Boothby, with whom he lived at Langton Hall, when hunting the Harborough side of the country; the hounds were then kept at Bowden Inn. In his early days he took a large number of hounds into the field, as many as forty couple, it has been said; but in after-years, and with more experience, he considerably modified this system. On the 9th of November, 1793, his hounds killed a fox at Red Hill with a white ring round his neck, and three white pads, and on the 12th September, 1796, Pillager, Seaman, and Concord, went away by themselves with a fox from Stockerton Park Wood, and killed him at Peasbrook. His friend, Mr. Childe, of Kinlet Hall, Shropshire, introduced the quick system of riding to hounds now practised, which others soon took up;

and in those days of comparatively small fields, perhaps he could not foresee the mischief he was doing to sport by the example he thus set.

In 1800 Mr. Meynell sold his hounds to Lord Sefton, and soon afterwards occurred the celebrated Billesdon Coplow run, celebrated in song both by the Rev. R. Louth and Mr. Bethel Cox—Mr. Louth's, however, is the copy now extant, so we may conclude, as it has survived, it is the better one, and it is said to have been composed in a night, some friends having asked Mr. Louth, at dinner, to write an account of the run. To their astonishment, the next morning at breakfast, he produced this poem. Several parts were, however, expunged before it was published, and this has since appeared in "Baily's Magazine," with notes on the whole.

Lord Sefton was a very heavy man, and first introduced second horses in the field, having his ridden behind him by a light lad, the son of Jack Raven the huntsman, instead of being ridden to points as is now the custom. He also had two huntsmen, Jack Raven and Stephen Goodall, both celebrities, as the latter well deserved to be if he could hunt hounds, for he could not have got into his saddle under twenty stone. He afterwards went to Sir Thomas Mostyn. Lord Foley was the next master, but he only kept them a year, with Joe Harrison as huntsman; and then came Mr. Thomas Assheton Smith, the boldest and best man that ever sat in pigskin—a man who had hands and knowledge, as well as nerve, and took horses first over a country that many men would not have dared to mount, though it is true he hunted to ride instead of riding to hunt. At that time he rode low-priced horses, seldom giving over fifty, and then was not to be beaten. Mr. Smith was a thorough sportsman, and, perhaps, with one or two exceptions, as good a gentleman huntsman as has ever been seen. In Leicestershire his fine and determined horsemanship stood him in good stead, as he never lost his fox because there was a big fence between him and the line where he wanted to make his cast. On the

other hand, the Druid tells us that on Jack o'Lantern, and some of his other favourites, he would gallop along with a slack rein, his whole attention absorbed in his hounds, and allow his horse to take him over whatever obstacles came in his way, apparently almost unconscious of their existence. In this way he was once carried right into the middle of one of the ponds with which Leicestershire fields abound. There is generally a slight fence round three sides of them; this came in his horse's line, and he, not aware that the squire was looking back for his hounds, and accustomed neither to turn to the right or the left when any obstacle was before him, instead of swerving as most men's horses would have done, charged it, and jumped into the pond. He was not so great a houndman as many less celebrated in hunting annals, never fed them himself, and had few favourites, but seemed to gain great mastery over them in the field; and, without effort on his part, they became exceedingly attached to him, so that, when the whips had taken them on to the fixture, they would immediately break away on his approach, and no one could stop them. He bought Mr. Musters' pack when he took the Quorn, and was very capricious as to size, first being all for big ones, then reducing them to three and twenty inches, and, finally, at Tedworth, in his later days, getting them bigger again. He was rather a hound buyer than a hound breeder, and could do as much with a scratch pack (as he showed at first at Tedworth) as many could with a made one. When I say hound buyer, I do not mean that he depended on drafts from other kennels, but that he rather bought his packs than bred them, as many have done. Like Mr. Meynell, he had a very celebrated little horse in Tom Thumb, scarcely fourteen three, but he was a little big one; Gift, whom no one could ride when in Lord Mornington's hands, and who gave him to Mr. Smith, was another first-rate one; as was Ayston; also the Big Grey. The celebrated Tom Edge, noted for his pointers and weight-carriers, lived with him at Quorndon Hall; and, heavy as he was, when on Gayman or Banker he was not to be beaten for twenty

minutes. Mr. Smith had some first-class men as whips in Leicestershire—Dick Burton, of whom Lord Henry Bentinck said that he was the best hand at breaking a pack of hounds for hares, and teaching them to draw, that he ever saw—Jack Shirley, Tom Wingfield, and Tom Day, who died last year.

Mr. Osbaldeston, commonly called "The Squire," succeeded him in 1816, and was an equally noted character as his predecessor, a very fine horseman, cricketer, and shot, though, I venture to think, not better than Mr. Smith in either sport, though more given to notoriety and public display of his powers. Where he excelled was as a hound breeder, a science in which, I suppose, he has not had many superiors; it was a great feat taking out a whole pack by Furrier. As a huntsman I should say he was not equal to many that could be named, and there was a saying at one time that if he would *breed* the hounds and let Tom Sebright *hunt* them, the thing would have been perfect. Jack Stevens, who lived with him, was a first-rate man also, and Nimrod paid him the greatest compliment he ever paid any one, when, after describing the celebrated ideal run in the "Quarterly Review," in which every one was supposed to have come pretty well to the end of their *second* horses, he says he had ridden *one horse throughout*, and so well had he handled him *that he could have gone two miles further*, had it been required. The Squire had some rare horses under him—Ashton, who was quite a race-horse in appearance, and on him Jack Stevens stopped the hounds with an afternoon fox, when every one else was beaten on their second horses. He was sold, after being some years in the Squire's stable, to Lord Plymouth for 500 guineas. Then there was Clasher, celebrated for his matches with Clinker, and others that were very hard to beat. Such was Osbaldeston's love of the chase that he would hunt six days a week, and even then have out two packs of a day in the spring. As a huntsman he must certainly rank much lower than Mr. Smith, as was conclusively proved by their efforts in Hants, where both of these rivals went—Mr. Smith to the Tedworth county, with a

scratch pack of anything he could pick up at first—Osbaldeston with his superb pack to the Hambledon, a much better scenting country than the Tedworth, where he could do literally nothing at all, while Mr. Smith, in spite of big woods, showed such sport as could not be excelled in any country.

Sir Bellingham Graham succeeded Osbaldeston in 1821, and had the enormous subscription of 4000*l.*, but was in office only two years, when he exchanged countries with Osbaldeston, taking the Hambledon off his hands, and allowing him to come back to Quorn, where he remained until 1828, when Lord Southampton became master, and removed the kennels from Quorn to Humberstone Gate. The original name was dropped, and they were known as Lord Southampton's hounds. In 1831, Sir Harry Goodricke became master, and built kennels at Thrussington, on which he expended six thousand pounds, and he gave a thousand pounds for the Duke of Bedford's pack. Mountford carried the horn, and George Beers and Will Derry were his whips. His melancholy death in Ireland cut short his reign, and he was succeeded in the mastership by Sir Francis Holyoake Goodricke, of Studley Castle, to whom he left all his unentailed property. He quickly gave up hunting altogether, and was succeeded by Mr. Rowland Errington, and then came Lord Suffield, who lived with Lord Gardner at Lowesby Hall, and moved the kennels to Billesden. There was little sport in this reign, though no expense was spared. Perhaps the old adage of too many cooks spoiling the broth held good here, for a poet of the time wrote,—

> And S——d keeps, whilst G——r hunts the hounds.

In 1839, Mr. Hodgson, from the Holderness, was master, but was by no means so successful across the Leicestershire pastures as amongst the drains and wolds of the East Riding. He kept them for two years, and then came Mr. Green, of Rolleston, the first local master, if I may use the term, that ever had the Quorn. Tom Day was his huntsman, and latterly Captain Percy Williams

was his *locum tenens* on the Harborough side. In 1847 came Sir Richard Sutton, and the Quorn country was done as it had never been done before. Sir Richard never had a farthing in the way of subscription, and spent ten thousand a year on the establishment. In 1853 he gave up the Harborough side to his son, Mr. Richard Sutton, and thus was formed what is now Sir Bache Cunard's country—a piece of the Cottesmore round Ranksborough being for a time added to it, which has since been reclaimed by the late Lord Lonsdale.

On Sir Richard Sutton's decease, in 1855, Lord Stamford took the Quorn, first with Ben Boothroyd as huntsman; and afterwards John Treadwell carried the horn, and showed wonderful sport, averaging forty-two brace and half of foxes a season, while he was with them. In 1863, Lord Stamford gave up, and Mr. Clowes, a son-in-law of Sir Richard Sutton, took the country, and gave his lordship 2000 gs. for the pack. He held them for three seasons, when the hounds were sold at Quorndon by Mr. R. Tattersall, and the Marquis of Hastings took the country, which he only held for two years. He knew nothing about hunting, and was quite out of his element as a master of hounds. His huntsmen were Charles Pike and Tom Wilson, each of whom stayed a year with him. Then came Mr. J. Chaworth Musters, with Frank Gillard as huntsman, and showed most unprecedented sport until 1869, when he resigned, and Mr. John Coupland became master. James McBride was huntsman for a time, and then Tom Firr came from the North Warwickshire. Mr. Coupland bought the Craven hounds of Mr. Willes, of Hungerford Park, when he gave up that country, and, by going to the Belvoir blood for crosses, has succeeded in breeding one of the very best packs in England at the present moment, though some of his cracks go back to the Craven blood direct. He has taken a great interest in hound shows, and been very successful, but has by no means lost sight of the first qualities of a hound in the field—nose and music—and their sport has been unsurpassed for some years. A portion of the Derbyshire side has been

given up to Earl Ferrers within a year or so, who has established a two day a week country, in what I fancy must be pretty much the lines of the Donnington, hunted about fifty years ago by the then Marquis of Hastings, but since that pretty much merged in the Quorn, so that now no less than three distinct packs are hunting the country, which was no more than sufficient for Mr. Meynell a hundred years ago. I believe I have read that he hunted but three days a week, while, at the present time, the various packs make regularly eight days a week, and with by-days often ten and eleven. Could any stronger proof of the increasing popularity of the chase be wanting?

As I said above, very soon after Sir Richard Sutton's death, Mr. Richard Sutton relinquished the portion on the Harborough side, which he had hunted, and as Lord Stamford refused to take it on with the other portion of the Quorn, all that side was in danger of being left without hounds. Then it was that, very late in the year 1856, Mr. Tailby came forward at the request of the land and covert owners, and thus was formed what has ever since been known as Mr. Tailby's or the Billesdon country.

This of course effected a great change, and Market Harborough became, as it were, a sort of second Melton. Mr. Tailby got a capital pack of hounds, built the kennels at Billesdon, and secured Tom Day as huntsman, while the country, not to be outdone, set to work to make gorse coverts, and expended a large amount of money in rendering the country what it has since become. Men flocked into Market Harborough, houses were built, stables taken, and a complete change wrought. In fact, many good men took residences in the country on Mr. Tailby's accession to the mastership, notably Mr. St. John, of Bitteswell, as fine a judge of all that appertains to the chase as could anywhere be found; and now I hear that, as Mr. Tailby gave up last spring, he will be seen in Leicestershire no more, saying that "he came into the country with Mr. Tailby, and he should go out with him."

The late Lord Hopetoun, master of the Pytchley in 1852, was a good supporter, and there is a covert in the hunt still known as Lord Hopetoun's; and I remember seeing the present lord out with him in the holidays, and no smarter little fellow ever sat on a pony. Captain Whitmore at Gumley, well known behind his fine team of greys in the park; Sir Henry Halford, of Wistow Hall; Mr. J. B. Angell, of Lubenham, the owner of Alcibiade; the late Mr. Baillie, of Ilston Grange; the Rev. Cave Humphrey, of Langton; Major Bethune, of Barton Overy; Col. and Mrs. Arthur, late of Desbro'. The Messrs. Goslings came out from Harborough in almost a regiment (one of them now has the Puckeridge), and the Messrs. de Murietta, well known both in the hunting-field and on the polo ground, &c., &c. Space will not allow me to name a quarter, but I have done enough to show what a change was wrought by the division of an oversized country, on the certainty of its being regularly hunted. Jack Goddard succeeded Tom Day, and after him came Frank Goodall, as good a fellow and good a huntsman as ever lived, and he continued to carry the horn until he was offered the post of huntsman to the Royal buckhounds in 1872, and very sorry were the Leicestershire people to lose him.

Mr. Tailby then took the horn himself, with Dick Christian as kennel huntsman and first whip; this arrangement was kept on until 1876, when Mr. Tailby resigned the horn to Christian —no doubt a very wise proceeding, as Leicestershire is a country that very decidedly wants both a master and huntsman in the field; for when the former fills both parts, and is attending to his hounds, it is impossible that he can keep his field in order, unless he has extraordinary command over them, and is a man something quite out of the average.

In the spring of 1877 Christian left, and Richard Summers, who had been first whip in the Meynell country, where he had given great satisfaction, became huntsman, and although the country was strange to him, he managed to show capital sport, and there was a succession of good runs all through

the season of 1877-8. Summers was very patient, and on one or two occasions, I know, kept to his fox, and hunted him *past* coverts, which many would have jumped to the conclusion that he had entered, and where they would to a certainty have got on a fresh one. By this means good runs were secured, instead of being spoilt. In the spring of 1878 Mr. Tailby announced his intention to retire, as he had been master for two and twenty years, and he thought it time such an onerous post as Master of Hounds in High Leicestershire should be in the hands of a younger man.

On this some few covert owners agreed to allow the Quorn to draw their coverts again *before* anything was said about the Billesdon pack being continued, but the other landowners and farmers in the country did not like the idea of giving up their independence after having enjoyed it so long, and at least two meetings were held, the first, with Sir Henry Halford in the chair, when a committee was appointed to take steps for inducing Sir Bache Cunard to hunt the country, and he, having agreed to do so, purchased Mr. Tailby's pack of bitches (the dog-hounds were sold off seven years before, when the Cottesmore country reclaimed that portion which had been lent to Mr. Tailby) for, I believe, the sum of two thousand guineas; and it was decided to build new kennels at Medbourne, a much more central position than Billesdon. However, the Quorn then *claimed* the country by right, and Mr. Coupland said he should draw those coverts which the owners had given him permission to do, and at the present date the matter thus stands. Mr. Tailby, in a letter to the "Sporting Gazette," dated April 16th, 1878, distinctly says that he took the country because it was relinquished by the Quorn in Lord Stamford's time, and that the Quorn refused to take back that portion which Sir Richard Sutton had resigned to his son. On the other hand, it is argued that the country was only *lent*, and can now be resumed; and in that case it was proposed to let Lord Ferrers have a slice on the other side, enough to give him two more days a week, and build

kennels in more central situations than Quorndon, thus converting the Quorn into a five days a week pack, with just the cream of their country.

It has now been settled that Sir Bache Cunard is to hunt the Billesdon country for the present season at any rate.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BURTON.

> Across the plough'd grounds, well hunted, good hounds,
> But you must come down to your noses.

ANOTHER country of which I must lay some description before my readers is the Burton, and although there are now many better to be found, in what has been termed the Homeric age of fox-hunting, the early part of the present century, it ranked quite as one of the best, and some of our most celebrated masters of hounds have thought it worthy of their time and attention to hunt it. Its records commence in 1780, when Lord Monson was master; Evans was his huntsman, Tom Barnes the first whip, and James Wilson second. The hounds were, tradition asserts, of a very handsome black, white, and tan colour, and from them the Belvoir derived the colour which has been so jealously preserved in the kennel. They must also have been of some celebrity, as I find one called Crier was used in the Brocklesby kennel, and that would be enough to at once stamp them as something out of the common; they were also famed for their stoutness, but were not particularly level; in fact, that was not so much noticed in those days as the present. Men cared less for show and more for work; good voices and fine noses were more especially sought after. I once heard old Will Danby, at the York Hound Show, when some of the huntsmen were having a joke with him about his bow

legs, retort, "Ah, they did not think so much about legs and feet when I was born as you do now." Lord Monson held the country until 1810, and then sold his hounds to Mr. Osbaldeston for 800 guineas, and retired, the Squire commencing the career as master of hounds, in which he was destined to become so celebrated in the Burton country. He also hunted part of the South Wold woodlands. So bothered was he at first to get the foxes away from the Wragby woods, that it is said he stationed a man at the cross-ridings with a gun, to pepper them as they passed. He lived in the Palace at Lincoln, and it was while in the Burton country that he purchased the celebrated little mare, after seeing her jump a big wall at the end of a very hard day, with which he challenged to run any horse in England four miles across country. She was only fourteen hands three inches in height, but wonderfully powerful. He here, as elsewhere, acted as his own huntsman, and showed capital sport, being assisted by his friend Mr. John White. For five years Mr. Osbaldeston hunted the Burton country, and then was succeeded by Mr. Assheton Smith, who gave up the Quorn to go there, and a great many of the Meltonians followed him, but found that the large drains of the Burton country were worse to get over than the brooks and ox-fences of the Quorn, and one by one they forsook him, and went back to Leicestershire once more. It is related in his life that no less than sixteen of them were floundering about in the Tilla at the same time, and Tom Smith was the only one that got out on the right side. Sir David Baird and Sir Harry Goodricke were not to be shaken off, and stayed with him to the end of the season. Mr. Smith hunted the Burton country with his big hounds, bred pretty much from the sort of old John Warde, which he had formerly very much ridiculed, and often termed them John Warde's jackasses.

Mr. Smith held the Burton country eight seasons, and then was succeeded by Sir Richard Sutton, who purchased the whole establishment of him in 1822. Like his predecessor, he was

a particularly fine horseman, and, indeed, it would be very little use for any man to take hounds in the Burton country who was not, for it is by no means an easy one to cross. His huntsman was the notorious Jack Shirley, who had been with Mr. Smith, and with him went into Lincolnshire; but Sir Richard did not wait long before he took hold of them himself, and Shirley subsided into kennel huntsman. In 1826 Sir Richard was laid up with a broken thigh, and Mr. Foljambe, who afterwards became so celebrated as master of the Grove, managed the country for him; hence there has arisen a notion that he at one time had this country, but it is not so. Lord Henry Bentinck took the country in 1842, and bought some of Lord Ducie's hounds when he gave up the Vale of White Horse. The celebrated Dick Burton was with Lord Henry from 1843 to 1849, and he had most of the men of note with hounds under him at one time or the other; for, patient as he was with hounds, he was very particular, and hard to please with huntsmen and whips, and few stayed with him very long. Lord Henry said Dick Burton was the best hand entering young hounds he ever saw. He had an intense dislike to seeing a whip turn his head if he was watching a ride, and said no man could watch one properly that did so. On one occasion he watched a whip, and said he turned his head seven times in five minutes. He would by no means have hounds interfered with, and knowing how carefully he had bred them, trusted them, and liked to see them do their own work, instead of being bustled about by a huntsman who, perchance, knew less of the matter in hand than they did. It was his custom to have his hound lists bound up with blank leaves, and on these he noted the peculiarities, good or bad, of each hound, and referred to them as a guidance in breeding. He cared less for large bone than many masters, but was very particular with regard to work, and to such perfection had he bred them that when he gave up the country, in 1864, they made the large sum of 3500*l*. He had hunted the country six days a week with a subscription, until his friend Mr. Chaplin, of Blankney, died,

and afterwards at his own expense until he resigned it. It was during the first ten years that he had the most brilliant sport, and good runs were continually taking place from the Wragby woodlands. During the latter part of his time foxes were not so well preserved.

No man ever mounted his men better than Lord Henry Bentinck, and, in buying hunters, price never stopped him. He would have given 1500 gs. for the Colonel, twice winner of the Liverpool, for his own riding, when he came to the hammer at Tattersall's, and was bought to go to Prussia, at which I am not surprised, as one who knew the horse well told me that, notwithstanding his having been trained and being entire, he was quite an old man's horse with hounds, quiet enough to potter about with harriers, and would let other horses pass him on the gallop, with the rein on his neck, and take no notice. I have heard that for a horse called Shropshire he paid 600, and agreed to allow the former owner 100 a year as long as the horse carried him. The following anecdote of his horse-buying experience is told in his memoir in "Bailey's Magazine," February, 1871 :—"Upon one occasion he went into the country to see a stud of hunters that was for sale. To one of the horses he took rather a fancy, and the proprietor volunteered the information that the horse was in the stud-book, being got by Z, dam by X, grand-dam by Q, great-grand-dam by O, and so on through the whole pedigree. 'How old is he?' asked his lordship. 'Rising seven,' was the reply. 'Z was my property, and he died twelve years ago,' rejoined his lordship, as he turned upon his heel and left the stable." He excelled as a horseman himself, and, no matter what the mouth or temper of any horse he was on, they almost all went nicely and quietly in his hands. When master of the Burton, he had over a hundred horses in his stable, and afterwards generally kept the number up to fifty, of which, perhaps, he would ride some four or five himself, and he was most liberal in mounting his friends. Although such a fine horseman, he never became a Meltonian, but stuck to

Lincolnshire and the Burton, and, when he liked to go, displayed as good nerve as ever to the last.

Lord Doneraile succeeded him, but kept the country only two seasons, when Mr. Henry Chaplin took it, and went on with Charles Hawtin as huntsman in the field and Ben Goddard as kennel huntsman. Henry Dawkins and Will Hawtin were the whips. So keen was Mr. Chaplin, that I have known him, when the days got long, take out a pack early in the morning and have a run, and then be at regular fixture the same as usual. The same liberal manner of conducting things which Lord Henry Bentinck had inaugurated was continued by Mr. Chaplin, and not only was everything well done at the kennels, but the men were magnificently mounted. I especially remember one horse that Charles Hawtin used to ride, called the Better Deed, as he was bought on a Sunday, and I never saw a finer fencer cross a country. It is needless to say that Mr. Chaplin himself has always been especially well mounted, as indeed was needful, as he is far from a light-weight, and where hounds go he goes, be the country what it may. He has, perhaps, never had a better horse than the grand chestnut, Emperor the First, which I have seen him go well on, and no wonder, as he was at one time considered the best weight-carrier in England, and report says that Mr. Chaplin refused a thousand guineas for him. With Emperor the Second, a good horse, but slow, he won the Grand National Hunt Steeplechase at Wetherby in 1865; and this appears to have been a very favourite encounter with him, as he was again to the front with Emperor the Third, an own brother of Emperor the Second, at Bedford in 1867, the horse having been schooled by his brother, Mr. Cecil Chaplin, and in 1870 he was successful with Schiedam, bred by Mr. Blenkiron. Mr. Chaplin also bought the celebrated prize-winner Tom from Mr. Gee; but, like most show-yard horses, he proved no great bargain, beautiful as he was (and I have seldom seen a handsomer), when asked to perform in the field, and dropped into the undignified position of a whip's horse. Either his

hocks or his wind, or perhaps it was both, went wrong, and the mighty prize-taker was heard of no more. Snowstorm, who could win steeplechases and get hunters, besides carrying his master with hounds, has done good service in the country; and when Mr. Chaplin had him and Dalesman at Blankney, no man in England could show two finer hunter sires, though I believe Dalesman was tried as a hunter and found wanting. His shoulders were too straight, though he could and did lead gallops for young ones when at the stud. What a loss his death was to the country, as well as to Mr. Chaplin, let Lowlander and the good hunting-stock he left behind him prove. Knowsley, by Stockwell, was also a loss to Mr. Chaplin; but the once-despised little Hermit has made him amends, and I am glad to say that he always has a good sire for the use of himself and neighbours.

In 1871 the Burton, which was an enormous country, and reached from the Duke of Rutland's on one side to Lord Yarborough's on the other, with Lincoln pretty much as the central point, was divided, as Mr. Chaplin found his Parliamentary duties and hunting such a country combined required more time than could be spared, so he retired from the mastership, and his brother, Lieut.-Colonel Edward. Chaplin, succeeded him, hunting the Blankney country, and Mr. Frank S. Foljambe took the Burton proper or northern side. Both packs hunt four days a week, and thus a country, which in its most flourishing time never afforded more than six days a week, now is hunted eight —another plain proof of the popularity of hunting. Henry Dawkins, who was first whip to Charley Hawtin under Mr. H. Chaplin, has now succeeded to the Blankney horn, with C. Boxall to turn them to him, and Will Dale, a son of John Dale, who is with Lord Radnor, hunts the Burton with Edmund Burton and Edward Bartlett as whips.

I have said the country is not so good as it was, and the reason is, that since Sir Richard Sutton's time a very large extent of what was grass-land has been converted into plough;

a big main drain also has been cut through a great deal of the country, which does not materially improve it. The Wellingore and Bruton side is very stiff, and has more grass than most parts, and Bruton top covert was the favourite draw of Mr. Chaplin, when he wished to show a brother master a run. The last time I was at it a farmer said to me, "Look round here, and you see all plough; when Sir Richard hunted the country, every acre was grass." The low covert is better situated, and has a bit of green almost all round it, but is not so thick as the top covert. Charlton Gorse is such a fine piece of lying that Lord Henry Bentinck was wont to call it "the model lodging-house," but the country round takes a deal of doing. Hilton is also a favourite place on the Wragby side. I have never hunted in what is now the Blankney country, save in the Wellingore side, but believe it is lighter, and with fewer obstacles to stop either hounds or horses, than the Burton. I may say, in conclusion, that Mr. Foljambe has, since taking the latter, been very successful at the Yorkshire Hound Shows, and has shown capital sport.

Mr. Henry Chaplin has again resumed the mastership of the Blankney country in place of Colonel Chaplin who resigned last spring.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COTTESMORE.

What! four of us only? are these the survivors
Of all that rode gaily from Ranksboro's ridge?
I hear the faint splash of a few hardy divers,
The rest are in hopeless research of a bridge.

I NEED no apology for bringing the Cottesmore country into the list of those that deserve notice in a work professing to give some account of the principal hunting countries in England, not only because it is one of the oldest, but also one of the best. In fact, if I perhaps except the Quorn, it would be very hard indeed to find one to beat it; and in many portions, even where it is not all grass, it has that wildness and freedom from interruption which is so dear to the heart of every true sportsman. It is all very well for people from town, who know no better, to ride amongst wire fencing, flower-pots, cucumber-frames, villa gardens, and such drawbacks to sport, and then, if they cross three grass-fields and jump three fences, fancy they have had a good day on the grass with the Queen's or some other equally well-situated pack, and indite forthwith a full, true, and particular account thereof to whichever sporting paper they happen to patronize; but every real sportsman knows that half the pleasure of hunting consists in running your fox over a country where he can make his point with as little interruption as possible, and where hounds will not be interfered with to any great extent in their endeavours to catch him. I am sure that, could huntsmen and hounds choose a motto for themselves, it

would be "far from the madding crowd" in more ways than one; and this freedom is to be found, to a very great extent, in the Cottesmore country. There is no large town within its boundaries, save and except Stamford, which is quite on one side, to send forth its holiday-seekers, as Leicester did on a Friday for the Quorn, until the place of meeting was perforce withheld from all but subscribers, as, although they meet at Stapleford Park, which is within a very short distanee of Melton, that metropolis of the chase is very select as to the quality of its visitors, and, although there may at times be a crowd of well-mounted men and women at the fixture, the rush of the great unwashed thereto is for the most part avoided. True it is that they at times get the cream of the Duke's, the Quorn, the Tailbyites, and the Pytchley men to meet in friendly rivalry, and over-ride hounds for each other's instruction and edification, as far as the scent and the nature of the country and fences will allow; but that is a thing that can be borne; and by the time the descendants of Lord Kesteven's big ones have been running ten minutes, there is generally elbow-room if there is anything of a scent. I have, in my time, hunted a good bit in the Cottesmore country, and am fain to say that, on the whole, there are few I like better. It has a good deal of plough on the eastern side, but it is plough that one does not mind riding over, and the fences are varied a little by coming across an occasional stone wall, which makes a change and adds a zest to the fun. The fields here are large, and the fences by no means desperate, so that a man well mounted may get along and enjoy himself. Then, as you work westwards, there is some of the finest country in the world. And he who has ever seen hounds go well away from Ranksborough Gorse, got a good start, and stayed with them until they pulled him fairly down in the open, is not likely soon to forget it. They have big woods, I know—those of Witham for instance—where you may perchance pass a longer time than is always agreeable; but let me ask those of my readers who may be inclined to turn their back upon them, to pause a moment, and

hear how, when the late Lord Lonsdale first had the country, in the spring of 1871, I saw them go away from these same big woods so quickly that many of the sharpest and best were left behind, and crossing the grass to Morkery Wood, and by Stocking Hall, gave us a regular twister up to Lord Gainsborough's Park at Exton, over which hounds raced as if they were running for blood, and then finally threw-up, when they had passed its greensward, and lost their fox beyond it, after as brilliant a gallop as one can well imagine. Strange to say, the fox was picked up the next day, dead and stiff, a little distance beyond where they lost him. Ten miles with scarcely a check is not to be sneered at, even if a large woodland is the starting-point.

But I must hark back to the era when the Noel family hunted this country, at a time, I suspect, anterior to, or at least coeval with, the institution of fox-hounds at Brocklesby, although, unfortunately, the records are not so well preserved here, and we can ascertain little beyond the bare fact that fox-hounds were here kept by them. The country was after this hunted for fifty years by Lord Lonsdale, and he was celebrated for the size and strength of his hounds. Sir Gilbert Heathcote then had it, Lambert carrying the horn, and the well-known Leicestershire rough-rider, Dick Christian, the grandfather of Mr. Tailby's late huntsman, having, for a time at least, the care of the stud. When Sir Gilbert Heathcote resigned, Lord Lonsdale again took it in hand, and he was succeeded by Sir Richard Sutton, who left it to go to the Quorn in 1847, after having shown but indifferent sport while here. Mr. Henley Greaves was master for five years, and was followed by Mr. Borrowes, who resigned in 1855, and the country was then vacant for a short period; but Sir John Trollope came forward and purchased Mr. Drake's hounds to hunt it, Ben Goddard coming with them as huntsman. At the end of two years Mr. Drake repurchased the hounds, and Sir John resigned. The next autumn saw him in harness again, having,

however, given up a portion of the best of the country to Mr. Tailby. He now began, I believe, with drafts principally from Belvoir, and, setting to work, bred an exceedingly good pack of hounds, although it is somewhat singular that, like Lord Lonsdale before him, he ran counter to the present fancy for small ones, and bred them larger than most people. He had one celebrated dog-hound called Seaman that he won the prize with as the best unentered puppy, when the Yorkshire show was held at Thirsk; and a very grand hound he certainly was. Lord Kesteven's (for he was raised to the peerage by that title) hounds could hunt, and had plenty of music, and in Jack West's hands, who went from Badminton, where he had whipped-in to Tom Clarke, showed very good sport, though the men were certainly not so well mounted as they should have been to live with hounds over such a country as the Cottesmore. The Hambledon had the draft from this pack for some time, and I believe they did well on the cold chalk hills, flints, and bad scenting-grounds of Hampshire—a sure sign that they had been bred the right way.

In 1870 Lord Kesteven resigned, and Colonel Lowther, afterwards Lord Lonsdale, took the country, and built new kennels at Barleythorpe, as the old ones at Little Bytham, where they had stood in Lord Kesteven's time, were very poor indeed. The portion which had been ceded to Mr. Tailby, and hunted by him, was now reclaimed, and the whole thing, if I may use the term, new modelled, the men being capitally mounted, and Jack West, having proper instruments to work upon, was enabled to show them what sort of a tune he could play over a country, and that his hand had not lost its cunning since he used to ride in such fine form in the Gloucestershire. Colonel Lowther succeeded to the title of Lord Lonsdale soon after taking the country, which unhappily he did not live long to enjoy, as he died about three years ago. He was a very heavy man, and consequently could not ride much himself; nevertheless, he was a good sportsman,

and knew how the thing should be done. At his death there was some fear that the country would again have been vacant; but arrangements were speedily made for his successor to continue the hounds, so that everything went on as before, until Jack West left in the spring of 1876, and Neal, the first whip, was promoted to the horn in his place.

Since that time all has gone on well, and the Cottesmore have had their fair share of sport, the last season being, I believe, a particularly good one.

In the spring of 1878 Lord Lonsdale resigned the mastership, and was succeeded by that fine horseman and good sportsman, Lord Carington, who, I have heard, when hunting with the Quorn, was in the habit of picking out all the biggest timber he could find. No other change of moment, however, occurred, and it remains to be seen what success will attend his lordship as an M.F.H.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PYTCHLEY.

"Now, Egmont," says Ashton. "Now, Contract," says Dick,
"By G—— we'll show these d——d Quornites the trick."

THE Pytchley country ranks in public estimation with the Quorn, and certainly is second to none, as the celebrated Osbaldeston said. It lies in the very heart of Northamptonshire, and takes its name from the little village of Pytchley, where formerly the Pytchley Hunt Club used to meet in the old mansion, called Pytchley Hall, when Lord Althorp was master, and the celebrated Dick Knight huntsman. Many tales are told of Dick Knight's prowess as a horseman; but, as most of my readers must have seen them over and over again, I will refrain from inflicting these old-world stories on them, and advise them, if they want to know more of Dick Knight, to purchase the set of prints setting forth his exploits, taken from paintings by Mr. Lorraine Smith, and which now can be got in London, though not under a strong price. The first master on record was Earl Spencer, who reigned in the country in 1750, thus showing it is as old a hunt as any now going, with the exception of the Brocklesby and Belvoir, and perhaps the Badminton. Lord Spencer had two kennels, and hunted both from Althorp and Pytchley. Mr. Buller, and the well-known Stephen Goodall, who afterwards went to the Quorn, followed for one season, and then came one of the most cele-

brated men who was ever known in the hunting world, and whose fame was almost equal to that of Meynell himself. I allude to Mr. John Warde, of Squerries, in Kent, who was master of hounds for over half a century, and for thirteen seasons had the Pytchley country. While hunting it, he lived at Broughton Hall; Bob Forfeit was his huntsman, and his hounds were so large that they were commonly known as "John Warde's Jackasses," and caused much amusement and joking in the hunting world generally. The Squire, however, knew what he was about; and although it is very probable that such large hounds were not exactly suited to the Pytchley country, many of the best houndsmen in England were glad to get the blood, and some of our most fashionable packs at the present time, and those that have made most money at the hammer, strain back to them. He was wont himself to say "that their heads were so big that when they once got them down it was a very difficult matter to get them up again," by which he meant, I presume, that they would stick to the line, and hunt a cold scent when lighter-looking ones would not. One great run they had, which has been recorded, and it was from Marston Wood to Skeffington, in Leicestershire, and over the very cream of what was Mr. Tailby's country. The Squire was as noted on the coach-box as in the hunting-field, and, I believe, at one time went somewhat largely into the speculation of horsing public coaches. He sold his hounds for good prices, and, in later years, when he retired from the Craven country, Mr. Horlock gave him a thousand guineas for his pack. His most celebrated horse was Blue Ruin, bought out of a hay-cart in Hungerford Market, for which Mr. Assheton Smith offered him three hundred guineas, after having ridden a run in frost and snow. Mr. Warde saw him pulling a heavy load of hay, and said, "That is just the horse to make me a hunter," and bought him. He was a very heavy man, exceedingly fond of company, and most facetious, though his jokes at times were somewhat of the broadest. Being asked why he had such big men as huntsmen and whips, he re-

plied he knew but little difference in the heavy men and the light ones, for one broke his horses' backs and the other their hearts; and once, seeing a whip taking undue liberties with a horse, he made him get off and run.

In 1809 Mr. Warde was succeeded by Lord Althorp, who bought his pack. The celebrated Dick Knight hunted them at first, and afterwards Charles King, another famous horseman. In 1819 Sir Charles Knightley took the management, and Jack Wood was his huntsman; and it is said of him in "Country Quarters," in "Baily's Magazine," that Charles King was his model huntsman, Lord Jersey his model horseman, and John Warde his aversion; also that Benvolis and Sir Marinel were two of his best horses, and that on the former he jumped a fence and brook below Brixworth, which measured thirty-one feet in width, and is still called Knightley's leap. He lived to be a great age, but gave up hunting somewhat early in life, and took to short-horns, alleging, as his reason, like Lord Sefton, that he could not get any horses. Sir Bellingham Graham succeeded in a year or two, but could not have had them long, as in 1825 we find Mr. Musters was master, and lived at Pitsford. He was one of the finest sportsmen and most athletic men of his day, second to none as a huntsman in the field, and while hunting this country he showed capital sport. His reign, however, was short, and, after one season, his place was taken by Mr. Osbaldeston, who had three of the most noted men under him that have ever been found in one kennel at the same time. These were Jack Stevens, Jem Shirley, and Dick Burton.

Of Stevens I have before spoken; Jem Shirley was a good man, as he proved in many countries, while Dick Burton has earned a lasting testimonial to his abilities from the late Lord Henry Bentinck; and he, under Assheton Smith and Osbaldeston, served such an apprenticeship as will always make his name one of note in fox-hunting annals. The author of the "Life of Assheton Smith" says of Dick Burton, "A neater or better horseman than

Dick could not be seen, nor one more active either in kennel or field.

However, I am running riot myself, and skirting pretty wide from the Pytchley, so that, had I Dick Burton as a critic, I fear he would have been for "getting round" me in earnest. Well, Nimrod said a writer was nothing if not discursive, and perhaps I shall be excused if I follow his example. To return to Osbaldeston and the Pytchley, he, like Mr. Musters, was fond of all kind of sport, his overweening vanity leading him to think he could beat all men at all kinds of things; and that same vanity, unless I am mistaken, lost him a fortune. From what has been handed down to us, I should say that Mr. Musters excelled more in the field than the kennel, and Osbaldeston more in the kennel than the field. He was, however, most zealous and energetic in his endeavours to show sport. In 1834, Mr. Osbaldeston resigned the Pytchley, which must have been the last country that he ever hunted, and Mr. Walter Wilkins, Member for Radnorshire, took them, with Jack Stevens as huntsman, which arrangement lasted three seasons. Mr. George Payne, acting as his own huntsman, then had them one season; afterwards came Lord Chesterfield, who lived at Abington Hall, and did the thing here as he did everywhere else. He bought not only Mr. Payne's hounds, but also those of Mr. Errington, who was giving up the Quorn, and Will Derry, who had whipped in to Mr. Musters, was installed as huntsman. His lordship went well, and once set the lot over the Loatland brook on Marmion. There were good men and true going then, and Nelly Holmes had just begun to show them what a habit could do in the hunting-field. Jem Mason, also, was perfecting that riding which, a few years later, was to astonish the world on Lottery, by an annual visit to Brixworth. Lord Chesterfield did not stay long in Northamptonshire, and was succeeded by a man of a different kind altogether—"The other Tom Smith," as he was called, to distinguish him from Mr. Thomas Assheton Smith, both of them being Hampshire men, and both celebrated huntsmen at that time.

Mr. Smith came to the Pytchley late in the year, as it was difficult to get any one to follow a man who had done things so liberally as Lord Chesterfield. He was induced to undertake it at the request of the gentlemen and landowners of the country. Of course his turn-out was very different to his predecessor's, and the men behaved badly—at first refusing to go on with him; but Mr. Smith was not a man to be stopped by trifles, and when he took out the hounds with only some stablemen and helpers, and killed a cub the first day, things worked more smoothly. He was such a thorough sportsman that a good judge has said he would (were he a fox) sooner have many huntsmen after him with a pack of hounds than Mr. Smith with a big stick. In fact, he appeared to have an intuitive knowledge of the run of a fox, and thus could generally kill him, though he was apt at times, probably from this cause, to go off with only a few couple of hounds. On one occasion the Pytchley men left him when he would persist in working out a cold scent rather than stop the hounds and draw again, and were much chagrined afterwards to hear that he had a brilliant finish, and killed his fox as the reward of his perseverance. At the end of two years Sir Francis Goodricke, better known as Frank Holyoake, took them for one season, after which Mr. George Payne returned, lived at Sulby, where there is a good covert, and hunted the hounds himself, showing capital sport, and having altogether as jolly a time as ever was known with the Pytchley. There is still a big place shown which he jumped into the park at Stanford Hall, over some upright rails, with a big drain on the landing side; and I have heard that while here he hunted Queen Mab, a somewhat celebrated mare, but sent her to Dilly's at Lyttleton to be trained, because he could not get her over water, when she won Queen's Plates and other good races. I cannot answer for the truth of this, but I can just remember the mare, and that she looked all over like making a Northamptonshire hunter. For six years Mr. Payne carried the horn, and became so popular that he might have been returned to Parliament free of expense,

had his inclination turned that way, on Lord Althorp being raised to the Peerage as Earl Spencer, but he declined the honour. In 1849, Mr. Payne resigned to Lord Alford, who died during the season of 1851, and Mr. Cust acted as manager. The Hon. Frederick Villiers, of Sulby, then had them, and was especially lucky in his men, having Charles Payne as huntsman and Jack Woodcock as whip. This *régime*, however, lasted but a very short time, as Lord Hopetoun, fresh from Oxford, took the country, and went on with the same staff under him, doing the thing in first-rate style, and adding an extra day for the woodlands. He was a good judge of hounds and horses, had one of the best studs that was ever seen, even in this hard-riding country, the celebrated prize-horse Brown Stout having been twice in his possession, as he sold him to Lord Spencer and repurchased him; a chestnut, Firstflight (very rightly named), and a grey mare were also well known during his mastership of the Pytchley. Lord Hopetoun retired in 1856 (there is a gorse which he planted, near Theddingworth, still called by his name), and the Hon. Frederick Villiers and Hon. C. H. Cust became joint masters, with Charles Payne as huntsman. Things went on thus until 1862, when Lord Spencer took the country and hunted it entirely at his own expense until 1864, when he resigned, and Mr. John Anstruther Thomson gave up the Fife and took them. Charles Payne left to go to Sir Watkin Wynn, at Wynstay, in 1865; then Mr. Thomson took the horn himself, and showed such a succession of wonderful sport as has seldom or never been equalled in any country. Mr. Thomson, who was entered to hounds in Fife, where his father was master, and had the advantage also of studying the celebrated John Walker's way of doing business, was quite the right man in the right place; and although some of the ultra fast ones did not perhaps like his patient, persevering way of making his hounds work for their fox, on a bad scenting day, instead of trying to gallop him to death, they soon found that he was quite master of the game. He had kept both stag-hounds and foot-beagles when in the army, and is

said to be the only master of hounds who ever had a colonel as his whip. In 1866 occurred the great Waterloo run, which, with the Billesdon Coplow, the Wendover, and the Greatwood day with the Duke of Beaufort's, will in all probability be handed down to posterity as one of the best ever recorded. Mr. Thomson was capitally mounted, as from his weight he had need to be; and I remember once seeing in his stable six wonderful weight-carriers, all very clever, and I believe all six years old, amongst them being Iris, Rainbow, Fountain, Valeria, and two more whose names I cannot now remember. Of these, Iris and Rainbow have both been prize-winners; and I believe the former at one of Mr. Thomson's sales had a reserve of a thousand placed on him, and at one time there was some talk of his being purchased for the Prince of Wales.

Mr. Thomson gave up the Pytchley in 1869, and shortly afterwards a subscription was raised to present him with his portrait; and never, I believe, was more enthusiasm exhibited than when the presentation was made at the George Hotel, Northampton. He was taken on Iris, by the late Sir Francis Grant, and so good was the likeness, that when one of his favourite hounds saw the picture, she actually tried to leap on it, as she was in the habit of doing to her master, and would have done so but for the couples.

Mr. F. A. Craven, of Whilton Lodge, succeeded Mr. Thomson, and, with Dick Roake as huntsman, did very well for a couple of years, though Roake was very unlucky as regards falls, and Mr. Craven handled the horn himself a good part of the first season.

Mr. R. C. Naylor, of Kelmarsh Hall, next became master; and, no doubt, did as well as could be expected in a situation which probably he would never have taken unless it had been to prevent the country becoming vacant, as there appeared to be no chance of any one coming forward to take the post. At this time Mr. George Watson started the North Pytchley pack to hunt the woodlands round Rockingham Forest, Geddington Chase, and all the country bordering on Mr. Fitzwilliam's, which had

previously been reserved for spring and autumn hunting; and here, with Fred Percival as huntsman, they had some very fair sport for a time. Mr. Naylor was unfortunate in his men, as Machin, although a wonderfully hard rider, did not succeed very well in other respects; and when he left and John Squires, who had been in Russia, took the horn quite in the cub-hunting, he found not only a short kennel of hounds, but that he had a very slack, curious lot to work with. However, he was a most energetic man, and thoroughly understood his business, so that much better sport than any one could have anticipated was the result. At the end of that season Lord Spencer, to the delight of every one, again took the country. He secured Will Goodall, who had been under Frank Gillard at Belvoir, as his huntsman, Tom Goddard going on as first whip, and at once set to work to buy hounds, and bring things once more into working order. In fact, he made a large offer for the Puckeridge, which Mr. Parry was then giving up; but that gentleman preferred their remaining in their own country, so it was not accepted. Of course, with a strange huntsman, and hounds strange to each other, there was some little difficulty in getting things to go smoothly at first; but Lord Spencer kept his field in such order, and is such a good general, that huntsman and hounds have a much better chance with him than under many masters. In the course of the second season Goodall had the misfortune to break his leg, so that Lord Spencer was called upon to take the horn; and he was very successful in the capacity of huntsman, and showed capital sport.

The next season Mr. Watson gave up the North Pytchley, and Lord Spencer resumed the woodlands, keeping a separate pack and whips to hunt it two days a week, when Goodall went there and took the horn, his lordship hunting the other pack two days in the week as successfully as before.

A great part of the Pytchley country is very beautiful, as the coverts are small and it carries a good scent—the country round

Crick, Stanford Hall, and Winwick Warren, being equal to anything in the world. In fact the Hemploe, which was so well looked after for years by Mr. Topham, and found them a fox as often as it was called upon, forms the centre point of a magnificent grass country, than which nothing can be better. They have also some very fine country in the neighbourhood of Market Harborough, wherein is the famed Waterloo gorse, before mentioned.

This season, 1878, Lord Spencer has resigned the Pytchley, and Mr. Herbert Langham has taken his place; but his lordship will hunt the woodlands two days a week, with Tom Goddard as his first lieutenant, while Will Goodall and Charles Isaac go on in the open with Mr. Langham.

CHAPTER XV.

THE YORK AND AINSTY.

Hark! the brave North Easter!
Breast-high lies the scent,
On by holt and headland,
Over heath and bent.
Chime, ye dappled darlings,
Through the sleet and snow;
Who can over-ride you?
Let the horses go!

MUCH as I have already said about hounds, I have so far not touched on what must be termed the prince of countries for sport, although I am free to admit that there are much better and pleasanter ones to ride over. I allude to Yorkshire, which has, perchance, turned out more good sportsmen than any other county in England, as indeed it has the right to do, being the biggest; and as I commenced my Yorkshire hunting experiences with the York and Ainsty, it is only natural that I should give that pack precedence. They do not date back into the last century like some, for their annals extend not beyond the year 1818 as a pack; yet I believe tradition speaks of Colonel Thornton, of Thornville Royal, as having hunted in the county, who disturbed the inhabitants of the Riding by bringing a couple of wolves in his train when visiting the place, and was one of, if not the last who kept up a hawking establishment in England. He was also deep in the fox-hound racing which took

place at Newmarket at the latter end of the last century, the owner of Merkin and Lounger, with whom he challenged all England, as well as the celebrated pointer Dash—half a fox-hound, by the way—which he sold to Sir Richard Symons for one hundred and sixty pounds' worth of Champagne and Burgundy, a hogshead of claret, an elegant gun and a pointer, and stipulated for his return at the end of his sporting career at fifty guineas—an event which soon occurred, as he broke his leg shortly afterwards. The matches of the so-called Mrs. Thornton with Mr. Flint and Buckle, the jockey, will also be in the recollection of my sporting readers, who, however, may not all know that she shared the honour of the colonel's favour with a rival, and that the eccentric old gentleman, who had so far anticipated Mormon institutions, called them Dashwood and Dormer, according to their different temperaments, and that it was Dashwood, as might be anticipated, who rode in public as Mrs. Thornton. He lived for a time at a little farm close to Winsford Hill in Devonshire, called Ashway Ham, well known to all stag-hunters, where he kept a pack of harriers, and one who remembered both the colonel and the ladies gave me the particulars. He described him as a little, shrivelled-up, worn-out-looking old man. Besides the colonel, Lords Harewood and Darlington and Sir Tatton Sykes hunted the Ainsty country, and some parts by the river Wharfe were given up to them by Mr. Lane Fox on certain conditions. Various other bits were also lent and given before the country settled down into any regular boundaries, which it would only be tedious to wade through here. Perhaps, after Melton, a man could scarcely pitch his tent in more genial quarters, if he is fond of society, than York; and a sojourn at the Yorkshire Club is likely to put him out of conceit with a great many hunting quarters he may find elsewhere. Then, if his stud ran short when I was there, he could replenish it from Mr. R. Cooper's stables with nags which, if rum ones to look at, were, as a rule, good ones to go; and my own experience of them is that, when hounds ran and they got warm, the horses from the

Pack-horse in Micklegate were bad to beat, though I must admit that I have ridden better hacks than many of them were. There is always plenty of hunting to be got from York, and, on the whole, the old city is about as enjoyable a place for a man to winter in, provided he can put up with plough, as any one need desire. At least it proved so to me when I made it my head-quarters for a month or two's hunting, and I suspect it has not very much altered its character. There is a genuineness about Yorkshire hunting which is sadly lacking in some countries I have visited. The farmers are heart and soul in the sport—as are all classes, for that matter—and the patent leather boot and nosegay element is happily conspicuous by its absence.

Now, to return to the York and Ainsty, the pack was, first of all, in the hands of a committee, the Hon. Mr. Butler, Mr. Robert Chaloner, and Mr. Clough, being the members of it. There was also a divided command in the field, as Messrs. Barker and Waring hunted them, which is not so much to be wondered at, as they divided their attention between fox and hare; and as each requires such a different style of hunting, there may, after all, have been wisdom in this dual arrangement, though what sort of a pack they had, under these circumstances, it is not very hard to imagine. Neither is it to be wondered at that they changed about a bit as regards masters, but it is strange that, under the circumstances, they had the support of such a man as Sir Bellingham Graham, which I believe was the case. Perhaps he looked forward with a prophetic eye, and saw of what great things the country was capable. When Wilson, who was their first regular huntsman, retired, and old Will Danby came from Mr. Hodgson to take the horn, we begin to see daylight, and imagine they stuck to legitimate business, for many a talk have I had with the old man in his house at Acomb, which, with an annuity, was given him by the York and Ainsty Hunt, but never a word of currant jelly crossed his lips. No man

knew his business better, or could cheer a hound with more effect, or, I might add, had more falls, for he had been pretty well mended and plastered all over in his life. He never indulged in a stronger liquor than raspberry vinegar, though I am sorry to say that, at his death, he was libelled in one of those firework articles which sometimes astonish the sporting world by their ignorance, in the pages of the daily papers as having been in early days in the habit of letting the "maut get aboon the meal," as the Scotch say, and from this cause forswearing the social glass—an assertion which was very wide of the truth. In spite of what had been done for him in the York and Ainsty country, his heart clung fondly to Holderness, and he liked best to talk of Tom Hodgson and his doings. Mr. Ralph Creyke succeeded Mr. Lloyd as master in 1841, who had held the command for about fourteen years; and then Mr. Samuel Bateman took the country, which he held up to 1853, when he resigned, and old Will went to the Hurworth. Though Mr. Bateman gave up the actual command, he was, and I think I may say still is, looked up to as an able adviser when any emergency occurs in the hunt. Mr. Bateman was followed by Sir Charles Slingsby, certainly one of the very best sportsmen I ever saw in this or any other country, and he moved the kennels to Acomb (they had been first at Easing Wold, and then opposite the Knavesmire gate at York). But to do justice to him, I must quote from "Country Quarters," Bailey, November, 1871, where his character as a sportsman is thus sketched:—

"Sir Charles handled the horn himself, and was quick, quiet, and patient, letting the hounds, in a great measure, do their own work. He was a fine but by no means jealous horseman, and rode to see his hounds work, not to cut other people down, and, be the country rough or smooth, was always there when wanted. A few years ago he also occasionally took silk at the local York race meetings, and was noted on the flat for his

patience, as those who saw him ride the good-looking Mousetrap at Malton can testify. As a huntsman, he was acknowledged to stand quite at the top of the tree; and the prizes he gained at the great Yorkshire shows speak volumes in his favour as a kennel huntsman and hound-breeder. There is no doubt, at the time of his death, he had some of the best hounds in England on his benches; and few people have ever shown three such young hounds of one litter as Nestor, Nosegay, and Novelty, with which he carried off the chief prizes at Wetherby. Strange to say, they were also as good in their work as in appearance. In fact, he never sacrificed, as too many do, the working qualities for mere looks, and no more honest pack ever went into the field than his; yet, when he took to them, report says the York and Ainsty were anything but a brilliant lot. Sir Charles was a man in a million; he detested flattery, and was almost cold to any one who paid him compliments. He was never excited, and when he had killed his fox, after a very good run, he would simply say that it was a good thing. In the field he was courteous in the extreme, and even at times allowed them to press a little too closely on him when the scent was bad."

From the same source I must give his melancholy end:—

"On the 4th of February the hounds met at Stainley, and found at Monckton Whin, from whence they had a good hunting run to the Ure, opposite Newby Hall, where the river is crossed by a ferry-boat, the private property of Lady Mary Vyner, which was worked on the occasion by two gardeners, named James and Christopher Warriner, and was entered by Sir Charles Slingsby, Sir George Wombwell, Messrs. Vyner, Lloyd, Robinson, and some officers then quartered at York, besides Orvis, the first whip, thus crowding the boat with more horses than it was intended to carry, and the current from the floods was unusually strong at the time. Lord Downe and several others declined to enter, and one gentleman leaped back

to shore when he found how crowded the boat was. Ere half-way across the river, Sir Charles's horse, Saltfish, to whom he had just changed from a new roan that had carried him through the earlier part of the run, commenced kicking, which upset the other horses, and caused them to over-balance the boat, and in a moment all were in the current. Sir Charles swam for the shore, and made the attempt to catch his horse as he swam past—after he found his struggles to regain the boat ineffectual—alas! unsuccessfully, as he could reach nothing but the bridle, and in an instant sank lifeless in the water, nearly close to the north shore; the greater part of the others were imprisoned under the boat, amidst the struggling horses; Mr. Clare Vyner managed to disengage himself, and reached the top of the boat, to which place of refuge he also succeeded in pulling Sir George Wombwell, who was exhausted and unconscious; Capt. Key jumped clear as the boat turned over, and got to shore by means of the chain, against which he was carried. On shore all was horror, excitement, and confusion. Mr. Preston of Moreby, Mr. Ingilby of Ripley Castle, and Capt. Vyner of Linton Spring, dashed into the stream to rescue their friends, and the two latter succeeded in reaching Mr. Lloyd, but he sank from exhaustion when within a short distance of those on shore, and they were with difficulty rescued themselves, as was Mr. Preston. Mr. Richard Thomson, of Kirby, went to the assistance of Sir Charles, but could not reach him for the current, and was foiled in a subsequent effort to recover the body of poor Orvis. When the excitement calmed a little, it was found that, besides Sir Charles, Mr. Robinson of York, one of the best and straightest men in England, Mr. Lloyd, a welter-weight, who was universally beloved and respected, poor Orvis and the two gardeners were drowned. The bodies of Sir Charles, Mr. Robinson, and Mr. Lloyd, were recovered the same day—those of Orvis and the gardeners not for some days afterwards, when, strange to say, Orvis still grasped his hunting-crop in the

cold hand of death, and I have heard that his face was rosy and bore a smile. Mr. Robinson, who had a great horror of drowning, and could not swim, had always said that, in case of an accident of the kind, he should never quit his horse, and now he was the only man who had not dismounted, and he stuck to his saddle when the boat went over, but his horse very soon sank under him."

This, of course, caused great grief throughout the country—in fact, the county of York might almost have been said to have gone into mourning, and the York and Ainsty hounds did not meet again that season. Lord Middleton came a few days over the border on his side, as did Mr. George Lane Fox, of the Bramham Moor, on his, just to keep the foxes moving, and Mr. Hall, of the Holderness, brought his pack by train to York, and had a great day from Dring Houses. A long ringing run in the morning from Swan's Whin sufficed to get most of the field, who were strangers to the country, down, for neither the horses from the Holderness or Lord Middleton's country understood the cramped places and blind ditches with which Ainsty abounds, and several loose horses were to be seen together in the same field. In the afternoon they had as fine a run as was ever seen in this or any other country, eight miles as the crow flies, from Askham Bogs to Redhill, where the hounds were stopped, as Sir Charles Slingsby's sister, Mrs. Leslie, was living there at the time. Had it not been for this, there is no doubt but that they would have killed their fox.

Sir George Wombwell, of Newburgh Park, took the hounds, and the next season went on with Peter Collinson, from the Cheshire (a very good man), as huntsman. As if a strange fatality hung over the hunt, in the ensuing cub-hunting, poor Will Powter was killed near Askham Bogs. His horse fell with him at a blind ditch, and thus Collinson was left with no one that knew the country to lend him a hand, though of outside interference it is said he had more than enough, so that things on the whole did not work very well, and at the end of the second

season Collinson resigned the horn, and was succeeded by Tom Squires, who came from Lord Coventry. He had graduated under John Treadwell, with the old Berkshire, and was an honour to his tutor. As long as he lived he gave great satisfaction, and showed capital sport; but relentless fate had not yet left off pursuing the York and Ainsty, for in March, 1873, he was killed through his horse slipping as he took off at a stile, and falling over on him, in a run from Grafton Whin. He was a great loss, as it is well known there was no more promising young huntsman going. The same year the Hon. Egremont Lascelles, who had them for one season, gave up, and Colonel Fairfax took the hounds, hunting them himself, with Trueman Tuffs as kennel huntsman, and thus they have gone on up to the present season.

The York and Ainsty country holds a capital scent over many portions, and as the country is deep, and the fences of a very fair size, hounds have a good chance. Neither is there that pushing, jostling crowd that is to be found on the grass, though the fields here are large enough for sport. In fact, if a man is well horsed and has plenty of nerve, it is a very pleasant country to hunt in, but he must be a good one himself, as well as being on good horses, for the drains or becks take a deal of doing, and there are a good many of them about. These, when very wide, they slide down into, leap across, and up the other side, but it wants a steady hunter and good hands to accomplish this feat nicely. There is one advantage, the banks are generally pretty sound. What is known as the Ainsty part, situated between York and the Bramham Moor country, is, I fancy, the stiffest, and here are some capital coverts—Askham Bogs generally holding a fox, though they do not breed there, but in some earths on the estate of the Hon. Egremont Lascelles, near Middlethorpe, a short distance away. Stubb Wood is also a very favourite covert on this side of the country, and I have seen a capital run from it as well as from Askham Bogs. Swan's Whin, before mentioned, is also as fine a piece of gorse as I

have ever seen in any country. Hag Wood and Copmanthorpe are also very good. When you get to the other side the New Park, coverts are capital, and there is some very good country towards Stillington, which is wild, and has a foxy look, though I never had the luck to see hounds run over it. I believe it is the same right away to the hills.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HOLDERNESS.

"Will, this one we've killed in a tree;
The next we'll kill in the sea:
That is how it will be."

Another North Country pack, of which I must give a slight sketch, is the Holderness, and I select it because, although parts of it will give one a very good idea of other Yorkshire countries, such, for instance, as Lord Middleton's, both being very much alike on the wolds, no other country that I know will give an idea of Holderness proper, which must be seen to be appreciated. My object is to give as good an idea as is within my power of hunting in different parts of England, and its characteristics, in the short space at my command in this volume will permit; hence I must select countries which represent a certain district. The York and Ainsty may well stand for the Bramham Moor, part of Lord Middleton's, and other Yorkshire packs. The Holderness is totally different, first in situation, as it is placed in the extreme east of the East Riding of Yorkshire, and lies between the sea and the river Humber; hence, no doubt, is the cause of its carrying such a wonderful scent as it usually does. It is not, at the present time, what may be termed a fashionable country, as it is difficult to get over, in many places, and nearly as difficult to get at; moreover, there is little or no grass in it—the two last henious faults in the eyes of most modern hunting men. A country is little to them

unless they can ride over grass, and get easy access to town, should frost or lameness put a stop to proceedings for a day or two; yet they want to be back at their hunting quarters at the slightest sign of a thaw, and even at times to hunt in the morning, and go to the opera at night. Holderness does not fulfil these requirements, and, in consequence, is not extensively patronized. "Happy Holderness" many will say, and I am by no means inclined to contradict them. There is another thing, Holderness is emphatically a sportsman's country, and I take leave to say that very few but real sportsmen will ever be found in it. It is moderately free from large woodlands, but has sprinkled over it some very nice gorse coverts, which, although they certainly are not so good as woodlands for cub-hunting and making young hounds handy, are preferable when you get into the regular season. Castle Hill is a favourite covert, well situated. Benningholme, an ozier holt of note, is not what it once was; but Catwick Whin, a broom covert, is quite a sight. Wawne is a good wood covert, but I might go on *ad infinitum*.

At Meux Abbey they find in Mr. Richardson's laurels; but, when I was in the country, his gorse was sadly cut up from blight, as indeed were many others at that time. There is a very peculiar stick covert on Lord Londesborough's property, in the Carrs, which is seldom drawn without producing a fox. Old roots and trunks of trees have been thrown together to some little height, and, on the top of these, fagots, hedge-trimmings, loppings of trees, and all other rubbish of that sort is piled, thus making, as it were, a very comfortable earth above-ground for the foxes; and as there is a plantation of fir-trees of some little thickness all round it, pleasanter quarters could scarcely be found. It is situated in reclaimed fen land, light, but peaty, and open for miles—the fields being fenced by the drains which carry off the water; and, as the banks are treacherous and rotten, it may be surmised that it is a very difficult piece of country to cross; the drains also are

much easier to get into than out of, as the bottoms are not sounder than the banks. This covert, it will be seen, could not be drawn by hounds, hence terriers are called into requisition whenever it is visited, and men climb up and disturb the top with long sticks, as foxes like to lay high and dry when they can, and the fagots and bushes on the top afford them shelter and hiding-places, as well as the hollows beneath. The other parts of Holderness are as difficult to cross as this, the country being flat, and exceedingly heavy. It also is divided by drains, though happily the banks are, for the most part, sounder than in the Carrs, and, on a good bold water-jumper, you can generally get over them with safety, though as many of them are defended by a hedge on one side or the other, and this, when large, cannot be taken in the stride, it requires a quiet, clever horse, that will creep as well as jump, who can go well from his hind legs, and cover a good distance when through the hedge, to get safely over them. In fact, here, if in any place in England, you want a hunter, and he must not only be very strong, but very well bred, to carry a man of any weight over it. The other, or western portion of the country, is entirely on the wolds, open hills, light land, and, for the most part, light fences—such a country as hounds can and do race over, and men must go the pace to be with them. They must also jump in places, for the quick or thorn fences are getting oldish now, and have been carefully tended and trained from infancy, so that they are nearly five feet high, and, for the greater portion of that height, as stiff as strong timber. A horse rather blown, and striking them low down, would be rolled over to the greatest certainty. In the bottoms, between the hills, you come upon an occasional ditch, but they are by no means frequent in this part of the country. Beswick Hall, and the parts round about it, is perhaps as strongly fenced as any of the wolds, and, unless memory deceives me, there is a very beautiful gorse near there. Elton Westwood, Old Dale, and the Bishop's Burton woods, are some of the best coverts

on the wold side: but Dalton Wood, handy Beverley, is so tainted with garlic that, at times, hounds cannot run in it. I have heard that Mr. George Foljambe pronounced the wolds here to be one of the finest countries in the world for hounds. There is one thing to be said for Holderness, it is a very hotbed of sportsmen; the farmers are stanch and true, fox-hunters to a man, and, moreover, given to breeding something useful, as a rule; so that the hunting man and lover of blood-stock are equally at home in the East Riding. And out of strange corners and unexpected nooks you may, round Beverley, drop on a rich fund of hunting or racing lore, from the lips of some aged patriarch.

The first master of the Holderness was Mr. Draper, or, as he was more generally termed, Squire Draper, of Beswick; he died, aged seventy-five, on the 18th of August, 1776, and lies buried at Market Weighton. How long he had hunted the country, history does not record, but it is probable that he had kept either fox-hounds or harriers, or perhaps, as was then the custom, both in one, for a great many years. Mr. Darley, of Aldby Park, who was one of those roving sportsmen so often found at this period, came next; and as he also had what is now Lord Middleton's country at the same time, and shifted to the Beswick kennels for the Holderness side, probably he was orthodox in his tastes and stuck to fox, moving his quarters as game became scarce. Then came Mr. Osbaldeston, of Hunmanby, father of The Squire; his huntsman was Isaac Grainger, and his whips, Bill Marshall and Bill Carter—the huntsman a great man in his day, and the second whip the father of Sir Tatton's huntsman, Tom Carter. Rather a good lot all round, I should say. The last decade of the eighteenth century was scarcely half through ere the Squire of Hunmanby had given up to the Duke of Devonshire, who built kennels at Londesborough Hall, and he quickly resigned in favour of Lord Carlisle, who hunted the joint countries for some time. Then came Lord Feversham; but Mr. William Bethell, of Bishop's Burton, whose elder

brother lived at Rise Park, near Beverley, first had the Holderness country as now defined. In "Country Quarters" ("Baily's Magazine," January, 1872) we learn that "his huntsman was Jack Robinson, the most resolute fellow in the world. He once jumped the Driffield Canal. He would invariably turn his cap hind-side before when going at a very big place, so that people knew there was something before them when Jack was seen putting his head-gear in order, and Mr. Bethell would then turn round and say, 'I won't see thee killed;' hence he was called 'Hell-fire Jack.'"

At Mr. Bethell's death a committee hunted the country, consisting of Mr. R. Bethell, Mr. Sykes (afterwards Sir Tatton), Mr. William Hall, of Packthorp, and Messrs. Arthur and Henry Maister, of Beverley, the kennels being at Brand's Burton. Then, in 1806, Sir Mark Sykes bought Lord Feversham's hounds, and hunted the country for two seasons, when an arrangement was entered into with Mr. R. Watt, of Bishop's Burton, to hunt the two countries as had been previously done. In 1811 Mr. Digby Legard established the old Bethell country, and his huntsman, Naylor, said that the scent was so good in Holderness a man might there kill a fox with a sow and a litter of pigs. This lasted until 1821, when Mr. Hay, of Dunse Castle, took the country for a couple of years, and then occurred an interregnum, during which, I believe, Mr. Osbaldeston (The Squire) came for a very short period; but he was not the man for Holderness, and, although he has the credit of having planted some gorse coverts, he did not stay long. Indeed, without wishing at all to detract from his fame, it can with truth be said that he never succeeded in plough countries, whatever he might have been on the grass; he always very quickly relinquished a provincial country, however good it might be. In fact, when a man gives up the chase as he did, soon after or at middle age, we may draw the inference that it was less hunting itself than the *éclat* that he derived from it, in which Mr. Osbaldeston delighted. Mr. Hill, of Thornton, from

whose hounds the present Duke of Grafton's are, I believe, descended, twice during the season brought his pack into the country, in order that the Holderness men might not be without a bit of hunting, and very capital sport he showed them, in spite of his men curring it, and being totally unable to get to their hounds. He also came a month at a time the next season, and had a clipper on the 2nd of December from Wassand Wood, killing at Rabbit Hills, when he declared it was the proudest day of his life.

In 1824 the palmy days of the Holderness began, for then came to the front that thorough houndsman, Mr. Thomas Hodgson, who Sir Bellingham Graham said only lived for hunting, and he was a good example of what can be done with small means when the heart is in the right place, as he hunted the Holderness country four days a week for fifteen years with a subscription of 800*l.* to a 1000*l.* a year, and could not afford to dip into his own resources to augment it. But then he knew all about hounds and hunting, and although not an elegant horseman, as any one will allow who has ever seen the sketch of "Old Days in Holderness" in Scott and Sebright, he was a good rider, nevertheless, or he never could have accomplished what he did with his short stud. Like "the other Tom Smith," Col. Anstruther Thomson, old Jem Hills of the Heythorp, and a few others, he had a wonderful knowledge of the run of his fox, and in one season killed no less than thirty-seven brace in the Holderness country. Here he remained and handled the horn for fifteen seasons. A Holderness Club was established, people came from a distance to hunt with him, and Beverley has never known such a time before or since, for strangers came to winter there as well as gentlemen of the country. His manner was so kind, and his sport so good, that he was immensely popular. His kennels were in the town, and he lived himself at the Rose and Crown, in very humble apartments, from all that is recorded of him, for we read that "he could sit on his bed, stir the fire, and see his hounds through a hole in

the wall all at once." Afterwards his kennels were at Bishop's Burton. He had quite a scratch pack, and was, as a rule, short of hounds as well as horses, and at one time fed according to the weather, but soon gave that up. Let old Will Danby, however, tell the story as he told it to me one hot August afternoon, when sitting in his snug little parlour hard by the kennels at Acomb:—

"With Mr. Hodgson they used to go immense distances to meet, and frequently came home thirty-five miles. The master used to say that 'his men were made of cast-iron, his horses of steel, and his hounds of india-rubber.' Neither master nor man went to covert in a brougham, as do some of the swells of the period. They were often short of horses, and never had more than thirty-six couple of hounds. Once they were advertised to hunt two days running. They took sixteen couple of hounds the first day, and killed their fox. The next day, with *the same hounds and the same horses*, they rattled and killed another brace, and had eighteen miles to go home afterwards. But," added Will, "if I told the modern huntsmen this, they would call me a d—d old liar; but we used to go out to hunt in those days, and often came home at twelve o'clock at night."

Will rode one famous white-faced chestnut called Murphy, given to Mr. Hodgson by Lord Mountsandford, and this horse once carried him eighteen miles from point to point in an hour and twenty minutes. He was very bold, and, when hounds ran fast, would jump a gate rather than stop to open it, and on another occasion went through a run by himself. Another chestnut was the winner of 700 in stakes, and in one of his races his then owner rode him with a pipe in his mouth. Will's opinion was that Holderness was not nearly so good since it had been drained, and he said, "The wetter the better for that country; still, I have known them run on the wolds when you could not see them for clouds of dust." They were fenced with double posts and rails in those days, to protect the young quick

fences, and were, consequently, difficult to ride across. I have not space to record half Will Danby's curious runs while with the Holderness, but I must quote one to show what confidence he placed in his hounds :—

"Some men were standing at the side of a covert, when they saw a hare come out and go away. Almost immediately Levity, a badger-pied bitch, by the Duke of Buccleuch's Lexicon, came out and opened on the very line. On Will's coming up, those who were standing there said, 'It's a hare; we saw her go away. You had better stop her.' 'Yo, doit, Levity!' was Will's answer; and away she went, with Will getting the rest of the pack forward to her. Not long afterwards they passed a hedger. 'Seen the fox?' asked the unbelieving ones. 'No; but a hare is just gone along the very line you're hunting.' 'There, Will; stop them! We told you it was a hare,' said the same party. 'Yo, doit, Levity!' was again the answer, as the old bitch feathered on the line. They then settled down to run hard, and at the end of fifty miuutes pulled down a fine dog-fox, to Will's intense delight, and the great chagrin of Levity's detractors."

It was during Mr. Hodgson's and Will's time that the Holderness killed one fox in a thorn-tree, near Grandsmoor, when Rutland got up a hurdle aud pulled him down, and another in the sea, where he swam out until the hounds pulled him down, and Will rushed in, until the waves came over his head, to secure his prize, and Lord Hawke said, "Give me a pad, Will; this is the finest sight I ever saw." They also had some hounds go over in a run from Burton Agnes to the Spreeton Cliffs, ahout four miles north of Flamborough Head. They fell a distance of two hundred feet, and only those which landed on a piece of rock jutting out were saved. Ned Oxtoby, who was bred at Hessle, and had acted as valet to Mr. Hodgson, but was then whip, with a pluck rarely heard of, was let down over the cliff in a basket, and brought up those that were alive; and when he was safely landed on the top they found there was

only one whole strand in the rope; but as to the danger, to use the brave fellow's own words, "he was so anxious about the hounds, that he never thought about it." Save and except Billy Bean, I suppose no man ever had more knocking about than Will Danby, who has had a yard of sticking-plaister on his thigh, all his ribs knocked off his breast-bone, his head fractured, &c., &c., and yet lived to a good old age, as a specimen of the healthfulness of the pursuit in which his life had been passed; and a real genial old fellow he was too, though he drew no inspiration from the bowl.

I must not pass over another great, or at least well-known, character in this hunt—Bob Darling, *alias* Dog Bob. Bob was such an ardent disciple of Diana, that he might have put even the Ephesians to the blush, and when working in the capacity of an East Riding ploughman, so far forgot the responsibility of his situation, on seeing the hounds in chase, that he unyoked the fore-horse, and, leaving fallows and stubbles to their fate, threw in his lot with the chase. This, of course, ensured his dismissal, and he commenced horse-dealer without capital, in which venture the fates were far less kind to him than to some other individuals I could name, who have started under similar circumstances. Bob could not live by coping—perchance he was not rogue enough; at any rate it served his turn, though, for he became the earth-stopper to the hunt, and thus satisfied his venatic aspirations, and honourably fulfilled the office until he was past three score and ten.

In 1839 Mr. Hodgson was induced to remove from Holderness and take the Quorn, in what, I consider, an evil moment, because, so far, nothing could have eclipsed his renown; but both he and his hounds found the difference between a crack country and a provincial one, and certainly did not add to their laurels on the Leicestershire pastures, most probably from no fault of their own, but simply from the different circumstances in which they were placed. Used to a good scenting country—perhaps the best in England—plough as it was, even the

grass of the Midlands did not enable them to bear the pressure of the crowd of thrusters which they there found behind them, and no doubt the quicker style of handling rendered necessary through this also tended to upset them. However, during his two years' mastership he showed them a couple of runs which that fine sportsman who succeeded him as master, Mr. Greene, of Rolleston, thought very highly of, one being a two hours' journey from the Coplow, with a kill at the end of it, on January 20th, 1840; the other took place the next season, and was thus entered in Mr. Greene's journal, December 9th, 1840:— "The best run I ever saw; ran from Thorpe Trussels to the Spinney at Rolleston Brook, 52 minutes. From Halstead to Rolleston, not a horse within half a mile of them; twenty-two couple and all up." From this it appears that Mr. Hodgson's pack could do the trick when they had room. But he is only another instance of the old saying, that

> All sorts of countries, all horses don't suit,
> What's a good country hunter may here prove a brute,

applies to men as well as horses, and even to hounds. Each has his peculiar arena whereon he performs best; and, as I have said, Osbaldeston was not Osbaldeston when off the grass, so Tom Hodgson elsewhere was not the Tom Hodgson of Holderness.

Neither was Holderness the same without his influence, for although a very good man succeeded him in Mr. Robert Vyner, who had gained a name in Warwickshire, and as the author of "Notitia Venatica," who hunted the hounds himself, the sport was but indifferent, and the subscriptions fell off materially. Mr. Vyner differed from Will Danby in thinking that hounds ran best over Holderness when it was dry rather than wet, and would only just show the impression of the ball of the fox's pad. However, I should be inclined to throw in my lot with the veteran Will and his long experience, rather than Mr.

Vyner, and say, as Carter did, hounds ran best when it was "deluded with water."

For one season Holderness remained tenantless, and then, in 1841, Mr. Hodgson returned to his old love, and was associated with Mr. Carrington in the mastership, but Mr. Hodgson again carried the horn. Things did not, however, run smoothly, and his partner tried his hand for a little time, but, not succeeding, Oxtoby took hold of them for the remainder of the season, and Sam Burkett, the earth-stopper, turned them to him. As may be supposed, the subscriptions did not improve under such circumstances as these, and Mr. Hodgson having an appointment as registrar of the West Riding, he finally threw up the cap and horn, and sold his horses and hounds. A committee was formed by the late Sir Clifford Constable, the Hon. Mr. Constable Maxwell (now Lord Herries), Mr. James Hall, of Scorborough, and Mr. F. H. Reynard, of Sunderlandwich, and they for four seasons held the county.

Then, in 1847, Mr. James Hall took it on his own account, and continued the mastership until his death in 1877, thus having been at the helm for exactly thirty years. In his hands the country regained its former prestige, though I doubt if so many strangers have ever been found in it since, as came there to hunt during Mr. Hodgson's first mastership. His first task was of course to improve the pack, and he set about it by infusing a strong dash of Burton and Grove blood, neither were the strains of Belvoir, Brocklesby, and Mr. Hill's forgotten, and in time he had as good a pack of hounds, both in work and on the flags, as any man in England need wish to see. Stephen Goodall, brother to Frank, now with the Queen's, was his first huntsman, and he was succeeded by Will Derry, who had hunted the Pytchley under Lord Chesterfield, whom he always swore by, though he always had a good word for Mr. Hall. In 1851, Jack Backhouse succeeded Derry, and carried the horn until 1871. He was a heavyish man, and not quite so refined in manner as huntsmen generally are in the present day, but a

capital huntsman and a very bold, resolute horseman. The story is told of him that some years ago he was rather in disgrace, and Mr. Hall had been giving him a wigging going to covert. Soon after they found and came to one of those tremendous deep and wide drains, much too large to be jumped, which are the curse of Holderness. "Where is the nearest bridge?" asked the master. "Here is the bridge," rejoined Backhouse, whose temper was set up by the wigging; and, shoving The Dandy, the horse he was riding, into it, he got safely across, though the horse was known to be a bad swimmer, and, moreover, he repeated the feat again the same day. John Hollings succeeded Backhouse with the horn, but did not stay long, and George Ash, still there, was the last huntsman under the Squire of Scarboro'. Mr. Hall was a wonderful man himself over a country, notwithstanding weight, increasing years, and, towards the last, being a cripple; and, whether on the wolds or in the deep country, no one could beat him. Then it is true very few men had such horses under them, for his stable was as well supplied as his kennel, and at one time a good many thoroughbred ones from Sledmere found their way into his hands; he was quite as willing to sell as to buy, and Sir Richard Sutton had several from him at one time and another. Mr. Hall showed as well over the grass as in his own country, and I have heard of his cutting down the field in the Belvoir Vale, when on one of those visits to the Midlands that he always enjoyed so much. At the sale, soon after his death, the stud realized very large prices, and one made 700 gs.

The Misses Hall rode also in a wonderful manner, and with as much science and judgment as boldness; they could take care of themselves, were never in any one's way, and, in fact, when hounds ran hard, were not to be beaten. I fear it will be some time ere Holderness sees such another master as Mr. James Hall.

They had a very promising one in the Hon. Alan Pennington, for many years very well known in Mr. Tailby's country and

the Pytchley, not only as a forward rider, but a great enthusiast in all matters that pertain to hunting. He last season took the command, and the men went on the same as under Mr. Hall's management—the hounds having been purchased for the country by a committee—but I am sorry to say resigned at the end of it on account of the scarcity of foxes.

Mr. Arthur Wilson is now master, and, as far as can be ascertained at present, foxes are more plentiful.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SINNINGTON.

O Happy! if ye knew your happy state,
Ye Rangers of the Fields: whom Nature boon,
Cheers with her smiles, and every element
Conspires to bless.

No description of hunting in Yorkshire would be complete without an account of the Sinnington, which claims—and no doubt justly—to be the oldest regularly established country in England; and although both the country and their manner of hunting it are such as would make the hair of a Meltonian stand on end, they manage to have a great deal of sport at very little expense; and, if they have not the spreading pastures of the Midlands, they occasionally get a run over the moors, which would satisfy the greatest glutton that ever existed. As may be surmised, their records have not been very strictly kept, and the earliest master that I can learn anything about is a Mr. Wells, of Pickering, who hunted the Sinnington for some time, in conjunction with a part of the old Hambleton country, alone I think. Then came a Mr. Marshall, with George Brown as his huntsman, for sixteen seasons, when he left, and John Atkinson succeeded him. Mr. Kendal was then master, and after him Mr. E. S. Wormald, who was succeeded in 1866 by Mr. Tom Kendell, of Sinnington Park. A few years since, Mr. R. Ellerby took the command. For a description of the country, and the mode of hunting it, I shall turn to what I wrote in "Country Quarters," "Baily's Magazine," March, 1872:—

"Another pack of which I must tell you is the Sinnington, which claims to be—and I believe with reason—the oldest in England. Here we have still a good example of the way in which our forefathers conducted sport, when there was no local magnate to bear the brunt of the expense in providing it for them, as the hounds are trencher fed, or, in other words, instead of a subscription towards the expenses, each yeoman and farmer keeps a hound or two, as the case may be. The huntsman lives at Kirby Moorside, which, I suppose, we must designate as the head-quarters of the 'Sinnington Hunt,' where there is a small kennel, and, the day before hunting, goes round and collects the pack. Of course no feeding is wanted that evening, and he only has to take them to the meet, find his fox, and kill him. The sport over, he troubles no further, but just rides home again; and one of the most amusing sights I ever witnessed is to see the independent manner in which his pack take their different routes. They by no chance go beyond the right turn of the road, but will stop in twos, threes, or singly (as the case may be), sit up on their haunches a few minutes and watch him, as if to make sure that he does not intend to draw again, and, when satisfied on this point, put their sterns over their backs and trot leisurely off. By the time he reaches Kirby Moorside he is entirely deserted, save by a few whose quarters are in and about that place. Some of them frequently have to go as far as fifteen miles alone, but they are seldom or never lost, and no instance is known of their killing sheep or doing mischief on the road. The present huntsman, John, or, as he is more generally called, Old Jack Parker, came in 1850, and is a specimen of the old-fashioned, rough-and-ready type of huntsman, now but seldom seen, standing six feet high or upwards. Though an old man, he is as wiry and muscular as ever, and is a sportsman to the back-bone. To use his own expression, he 'comes of a fighting family, and was a bit wild when he was young,' and polished off some rum customers; though the licking he gave a navvy,

with whom he fell out at Thirsk races, and knocked out of time, when they subsequently met, in a couple of rounds, he considers his greatest *coup*, and dwells on that mill with the fondest recollections. No quainter bit of character can be dropped on than, when Jack's favourite 'mountain dew' has mellowed him a little, to hear him fight his battles o'er again. Mr. Digby Cayley has often taken him salmon-fishing, as he is an expert in all piscatorial matters; and on one occasion, when wandering by the river-side at Kelso, he was collared by two keepers as a poacher. Jack submitted like a lamb to her shearers, until, after a two-mile walk, his master was reached, when, exclaiming 'There's my master, and I go no further,' he hurled them off, and put himself into such a scientific attitude that they concluded, in spite of the odds, to let well alone, and abandon the idea of taking him to Kelso; so that his scientific attainments astonished the Tweedside natives as much as his peculiar form of head-gear, of which they say they have seen none like it either before or since. He is a capital shot, and, with an old flint gun, holds his own at all local pigeon matches; and likes seeing a couple of game-cocks settle their differences as much as he enjoyed a mill himself years ago. And I shall never forget the enthusiasm with which he expressed his wish to myself that his 'wife Nelly' was present when we talked the subject over, with a couple of red hackles, 'just to show you how she can set them.' Nelly is as game as her lord and master, and, a few years ago, would ride Jack's horse round *en cavalier*, when he was not inclined for the job, and gather the hounds from their different quarters. She always does up the nags after hunting—latterly, I believe, assisted by her daughter, who at one time delighted in nothing more than giving Tip (by Duc au Dhurras) a gallop, and warmly remonstrated with her father, on one occasion, because he would not allow her to wear spurs. But, as Jack told us a couple of years ago, 'She's gettin' ower old for those kind of things, you know, now, sir.' The said Tip

would carry no one but Jack or 'the lassie,' and was a thundering big sixteen-two Irish horse that could jump a tower. He once topped a wall of Lord Feversham's, built to keep the deer back; and, when Jack was on the road from Thirsk to Northallerton, settled a dispute with the 'pike' woman by treating her gate in the same cavalier fashion, though, with tears in her eyes, the old lady begged Jack to desist, and said she would let him through free rather than he should risk his neck in the attempt.

"While the foxes are at rest, in the summer months, Parker keeps his hand in at the badgers, and, strange to say, his hounds will not speak to a fox when so engaged, and throw quite a different note when hunting 'Brock.' Perhaps, of the two, he likes better to get away with Mr. Galton's otter-hounds, and swears 'there never was such music heard as that.'

"At the hound-show at York, Lord Poltimore very much wanted to see him, and was duly introduced by Mr. Parrington, when Jack held out his hand and said, 'I am very glad to see you;' then they got on famously, in spite of the desperately broad Yorkshire dialect in which Jack indulges, making an interpreter all but a necessity when he fraternizes with a south countryman. His lordship wanted to hear a real Yorkshire View holloa; then, by Jove! Jack shouted and gave him one. No doubt Jack is the character of the age amongst huntsmen, and, when he's gone, we ne'er shall look upon his like again."

This is a truthful sketch of the Sinnington ménage at the time, it was a few years ago, and, I suspect, things have not greatly altered since. The country is composed of dingles, woods, and steep hills, and part of it lies on the moors. Their low country is short of good coverts, but, on the whole, I suppose that, except in parts of Devonshire or Wales, the match of the Sinnington, both for sport and the little expense at which it is procured, could not possibly be found. I may state that Mr. Robert Ellerby is the present master.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DUKE OF BEAUFORT'S HOUNDS.

Ye vig'rous youths, by smiling Fortune blest
With large demesnes, hereditary wealth,
Heap'd copious by your wise forefathers' care,
Hear and attend, while I the means reveal
T' enjoy those pleasures, for the weak too strong,
Too costly for the poor.

HAVING taken my readers with me through some of the best grass and plough countries in the middle and North of England, it is now time that I turned westward, in order that they may form some idea of what style of hunting is there to be found; and I can assure them that, could they transport themselves and a good stud of horses to the countries bordering the Severn, they would have little to regret, even supposing they had left the far-famed Midlands behind them. I can find no better pack to represent the sport that is to be found in this part of the world than the Duke of Beaufort's, and I am sure that, if a foreigner wished to see how fox-hunting was carried to the greatest perfection, there is no place in England which would give him a better idea of it than Badminton, for assuredly everything is there done in the most princely style. It is now some few years since I hunted in that country; but, when I did so, the order of the day was something after this fashion:—The first thing to attract a stranger's attention in the morning, would be at least a dozen or fifteen hunters, often more, going forward to the meet, in the care of second horsemen and grooms, for the use of the duke, his guests,

and the hunt servants. Somewhat later, the hound-van would come on the scene, drawn by four mules, and driven by Jack West, the then head whip. Perhaps an hour after this the drag came to the door; either the duke or the Marquis of Worcester took the ribbons, and the coach was pretty well sure to be filled by such a load from the house as would have gladdened the heart of any public coach-owner, amongst them generally being Tom Clark, the huntsman, whom, as he then hunted six days a week (and they never make half days at Badminton), the duke kindly took thus to covert and home again, when the fixture was at any distance, to lighten his arduous labours. That hunting hounds six days in the week is hard work no man knew better than his grace. The team, when the journey to the meet was a long one (and the fixtures often ran fifteen miles and upwards; for, where hounds can go six days a week, and be certain of a find, a large extent of ground must be covered), was, as a rule, changed half way, and a fresh one worked them to their destination, which was some hotel near the place of meeting. Here dry things, which were brought for every one, were left with the drag and hound-van, and one and all started fresh for the sport. On their return, luncheon was laid out, and having, if needful, got rid of wet garments and refreshed themselves, all went home as comfortably as they had gone to covert. I need not point out what a wonderful help to hounds and men is such a liberal style of doing things in a country where trains serve them very little, if any; and one of the most amusing things I ever witnessed is to see the self-satisfied air with which the hounds trotted up into their van, as if they thoroughly appreciated (as no doubt they did) being carried comfortably home, instead of having to drag twenty miles through heavy, dirty roads. There was no voice of authority wanted to get them into it. Fond as I personally am of change, could I select my own locality for hunting, there is no country I would sooner drop into than the Duke of Beaufort's, as, independent of

the magnificent scale on which everything is conducted, the country itself affords so much variety. On the Severn side, and on that next the Vale of White Horse, they have grass country, second only to the pastures that Leicestershire and Northamptonshire afford. On the Bechampstead side they can race over downs as fine as any in England, often without a fence to throw a horse out of his stride, and in the intermediate portions you have a wall country, which is exceedingly pleasant to ride over (at least for those who like walls, amongst which number I must class myself). Here is change enough to please any man, and the best of it is that there is scarcely any country in it that can be termed bad. Of course some parts carry a better scent than others, and a day wholly devoted to the lower woods is not exactly the same thing as drawing Scraptoft or Melton Spinney; but those same lower woods are a great nursery for foxes, and a capital place for teaching young hounds their duties amongst the cubs; and, moreover, in the season they at times show very good sport, when a fox will condescend to leave them, and put his head across the Berkeley Vale. But the great thing in this hunt is the certainty of a find in a short time, for the country is full of foxes, and it is, or was, no unusual thing for them to jump up from under the walls in the open fields; then what a rattler they have! for the great dog-hounds (unless they are altered) fly the walls in their stride, and there is no time lost at the fences. Poor Clark always liked big hounds, on account of getting over the walls more easily, and, when he was in his high day at Badminton, said to me that, if he had to kill a certain number of foxes in a given time for a wager, he would take his dog-hounds in preference to the bitches,—a somewhat unusual opinion amongst huntsmen and masters, as some of the most noted amongst the latter have said that from choice they would never take a dog-hound into the field. However, as I have before observed, all customs do not suit all countries, and over walls I certainly think Clark's theory is entitled to some weight, especially after

the experience and opportunity he had of forming an opinion. Amongst bullfinches, where hounds must creep, of course smaller ones would have the best of it.

When a man is well mounted on a horse that will jump up, and knows them, the wall country is very pleasant to ride over, and, if you go slowly at them, not half so dangerous as it looks, as in that case a horse will knock a good deal of stone-work down, with nothing much worse than a scramble; but if you are going fast, and he catches them, they will turn him over like timber. In the lower portions of this country you want a really clever hunter, as the fences are not altogether of a cut-and-dried description, though a very good man, when I first hunted in it, said, "If there is no ditch to you, you had better go quick, for you are sure of one on the other side; but, with a ditch your side, take the place steadily, and land on the bank if you can. Very likely there is another on the other side, as doubles are occasionally met with." The grass here rides much heavier than in the Midlands, and as the fields are large, and hounds go the pace, you want quite first-class hunters under you. Banks also are plentiful, and I have seen ha-ha's faced with stone, so that a horse which can go well to hounds over the duke's country may be pretty safely backed to hold his own anywhere. With such hounds and such a country, I need scarcely say that there is no lack of visitors, and stable-room is generally at a premium anywhere within reach of their meets. I ought to have said that they have some rough hill country towards Bath, which is used for cub-hunting only, and where they can commence as early as they like, so that the young ones are early initiated into the mysteries of their business.

Like the origin of many other packs, the start of this one, well-known as it now is, is involved in some degree of obscurity, and it cannot be said exactly at what period they commenced fox-hunting; but we know that Henry, the fifth duke, kept stag-hounds here, and at Netheravon, in Wiltshire, about 1753. The current story is that, returning from deer-hunting one day, he, from

some cause or another, drew Silk Wood, where he found a fox, who went away, and gave them such a run that he determined on fox-hunting instead of deer-hunting from that time forth. Whether he went on with the same hounds, or procured a fresh pack, I have never heard—probably the former, as they had done so well after the new game. Be that how it may, in 1770 he was hunting the home country round Badminton, as well as what is now known as the Heythrop, in Oxfordshire, and, although they were fifty miles apart, divided the season pretty equally between them, renting Heythrop House from the Earl of Shrewsbury for the purpose.

The first huntsman of whom we have any record was what Beckford called the famous Will Crane, and this, coupled with his being selected to train Mr. Smith-Barry's hounds for their match against Mr. Meynell's, which match, it will be remembered, they won easily, proves that he must have been a very first-rate man. He had some trouble with them at first—Bluecap being a four, and Wanton a three-year old—and would have preferred younger hounds, as they would sooner have taken to the drags. He had them at Rivenhall, in Essex, and trained them on Tiptree Heath, since become famous as the scene of Mechi's labours in the cause of agriculture, where he worked them three days a week for two months, feeding them on oatmeal, milk, and sheep's trotters. Thomas Ketch succeeded Crane at Badminton, who hunted them until he retired from old age, and his whip, Thomas Alderton, took the horn. Then came John Dilworth, who also held the place until age compelled him to retire. In fact, in the Beaufort kennels there is a very pleasant absence of change, which shows that the House of Somerset must have taken on none but good servants, and have kept them when they had got them. The sixth duke came to the title in 1802, and followed in the footsteps of his father, until Heythrop House was burnt down, when he ceased to hunt Oxfordshire, and confined himself to the home country. He was known as the Blue Duke—I presume from the hunt uniform being blue

faced with buff—the servants wearing dark green, as they do unto the present time. Early in the century, soon after the accession of the sixth duke, Philip Payne, who had already earned a name with the Cheshire, the Cottesmore, and under Lords Darlington and Thanet, came to Badminton, and from that time forth the hounds began to acquire fame in the land. No man knew more about breeding, or was more energetic in endeavouring to procure sires with good noses, and noted for work, and he cared not how far he sent bitches when he could hear of one. "The Beaufort Justice," as he is now termed, though he came originally from the New Forest, was one of Payne's ventures, and never did one turn out more successfully, for he became quite the patriarch of the pack, and report says that the badger-pied hounds, which are as noted at Badminton as the Belvoir tans at Belvoir, were introduced through him. Tradition asserts he was a coarse-hound, as many others celebrated for their nose have been. Payne had a whip working for him seventeen years, who was destined to eclipse even his fame; that was Old Will Long, who came to Badminton in 1808, to succeed Jack Woods, and worked on until he took the horn in 1826. He took a little of the coarseness off the pack, breeding them nicer and smarter than Payne had done; and he was lucky enough to have men under him equally celebrated, for his first whip was Will Todd, who afterwards hunted Mr. Harvey Coombes' hounds, and his second no less a man than the renowned Jem Hills, who appeared to have an intuitive knowledge of where a fox was going, as soon as he was found, and, whether there was a good scent or none, was sure to give his field a gallop over the Heythrop walls, when hunting that country in later days.

The seventh duke, on coming to the title in 1835, still kept on Will Long as huntsman; Will Stansby turned them to him, and the thing was as well done as ever, for this duke, like all his race, thoroughly understood fox-hunting, and was a capital judge of horses and hounds, though, before his death, Captain Somerset

officiated for him as master. He took the Chippenham country —before that hunted by Mr. Horlock—in 1842. It was during his reign that the notorious hunting Sweep was in his glory. At this time Will Long was so popular as a huntsman, that, in 1844, he was presented with two goblets, as a mark of respect, by gentlemen who were not members of the hunt. No change of importance occurred with this pack until the present duke (the eighth) came to the title in 1853, and then Long kept on the horn for two seasons, after which he retired, having earned a competence for himself. The duke, in recognition of his long services in the family, gave him a pension, and for years afterwards he was to be seen out with the hounds when they were on his side of the country. Then the duke took the horn, and, with Will Stansby as whip, hunted the hounds. For an estimate of his character as a sportsman, I cannot do better than again quote "Country Quarters:"—"No keener sportsman or better judge of hunting ever went into a field. Will Long said of him that he was the best whip he ever saw, and knew better when to let hounds alone, and when to interfere with them; and I have myself seen him lose a good run rather than leave a young hound back in covert, while he is so keen that he would think nothing of finding a fox at half-past six in the evening of a spring day. As a coachman he is quite first-class; and he or the Marquis of Worcester works a team to covert on most hunting days, while a few years ago he was equally well known on the turf, and had Siberia, Vauban, Kœnig, Birdhill, and other good horses; while he sets a good example to all landowners by keeping a stud-horse for the use of his tenants. Kingstown, who was second to Wild Dayrell, stood here for some years. He also had Grey Prince, the sire of some very good hunters, one grey especially being such a favourite of the duke's that, when his legs got shaky, he used to have him conveyed to the meet in a van. This is the horse on which he is painted by Grant, facing the duchess on Tetuan, which picture was presented to her in 1864."

In 1858 the duke declined to hunt the hounds longer himself, and hired Tom Clark, who had been with Mr. Morrell, hunting the old Berkshire. Moreover, when that pack came to the hammer, he had a buying commission from the duke, and secured some lots which materially added to the average of the day's sale, perhaps the most noted of his purchases being the celebrated Fleecer. William Walker, who was then first whip, was obliged to resign the following year on account of ill-health, and Dick Christian, a grandson of *the* Dick Christian, came from the Hon. George Fitzwilliam, and Jack West was second whip. Afterwards he became first, and left that place to hunt the Cottesmore, as I have explained elsewhere, and since the late Lord Lonsdale's death he has gone to the Vine. Clark was a man in every way suited to the place; he was a good huntsman, understood condition, and turned out as a gentleman's servant ought to do; though in his latter years he was certainly not so hard as some men, yet, nevertheless, being very well mounted, he managed to make a good fight, and was in his place when wanted.

In 1868 Clark left and took an inn at Chipping Sodbury—a speculation which I am sorry to say turned out badly—and, having lost his money, he took the horn again in 1869 in the North Staffordshire country, where he only stayed one season, and then went to hunt the Roman hounds in the Campagna. Here, poor fellow, he died in bad circumstances, and the subscription raised for his family, as well as that of another huntsman, was certainly a moving cause of the Hunt Servants' Benefit Society being taken up so earnestly as it was.

The Marquis of Worcester now took the horn, which, with Charles Hamblin, who had a rare training under the late Capt. Percy Williams, and had been also with Lord Fitzhardinge as kennel huntsman, while Heber Long, who had taken first whip's place when Jack West left, went on with him. From that time until now the marquis has hunted the hounds; and I know it is the opinion of one of the very best judges in

England that he is as near perfect as a huntsman as possible. He is very quiet, but at the same time very quick: a fine horseman, whether across the walls or in the vale, and he has done work that many men would shrink from in the way of travelling, to enable him to hunt his hounds and still discharge his regimental duties. He will, moreover, always be noted as having hunted the hounds when they had the celebrated Great-wood run on February 22nd, 1871—a day that may fairly claim to rank with the Billesdon Coplow of the Quorn, the Wendover day of Mr. Delmè-Radcliffe's, Lord Drumlanrig's great run, or the Pytchley Waterloo day, when Mr. Anstruther Thomson was master. All I can say is, I sincerely hope it may be many years ere the marquis resigns the horn into other hands.

There are few such establishments as that at Badminton; few hounds hunt such an extent of country, or so many days a week; and very few countries indeed where foxes are so well preserved; but then the duke is a fast friend to the farmers, always cheery with them, and exceedingly liberal with game and venison, which finds its way to their tables instead of to a London poulterer. That is the reason they never have any lack of foxes.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TEDWORTH.

Oh! ye who knew his healthful day,
And saw him make triumphant way
O'er frowning fence, o'er hill and dale—
Saw him the swollen brook assail,
And with what ease he could efface
The various obstacles of chase,
Say—who could beat him in its race?

In selecting types of the different districts, so as to give an idea of the same sport under various circumstances, I now come to the Tedworth—a country unique in itself, and still more so from the circumstances that have produced it. Strictly speaking, the Tedworth has no history as a fox-hunting country, apart from that of the great man who founded it. As an entirety, it had never been hunted until the latter part of the first half of the nineteenth century—in fact, within my own memory, and that of many others who have no more than reached middle age; so that, unlike the Brocklesby, Belvoir, Badminton, and other hunts, it may be called quite a recent institution. I do not by any means intend to say that parts—nay, nearly all of it—had not been hunted at one time or another by fox-hounds, but that no one individual pack had ever hunted regularly what is now known as the Tedworth country. The Craven, we know, drew the South Grove side, the New Forest, and Sir John Barker Mill that portion which is now in the hands of Lord Radnor; and no doubt the other borders were infringed on in the same way,

so that a very small portion, if any, really remained totally unhunted; but this no more constituted the Tedworth country than the Saxon Heptarchy constituted the kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Now, looking back at what it must have been when Mr. Smith first got a few draft hounds together at Penton Lodge and commenced fox-hunting, it is only with surprise that any one can realize the idea of a man with means to pitch his tent in any one of the best counties of England should have undertaken to hunt what is certainly one of the worst. Look to the north-east, and what was the prospect? The huge woodlands of Doles and Doyly, forests, you might almost call them, without ridings to give a huntsman the chance of getting to his hounds, or forcing a fox to fly; a little more westward was another stronghold in Collingbourne Woods, equally disadvantageous; eastward was Wherwell Wood, a covert which, from its immense size, has gone begging ever since Mr. Smith's death; and to the south a chain of woodlands from Clarendon Park to Mottesfont—black, dark, and dreary, wet, sticky, and full of bogs and sloughs. Add to this the Alpine country round Conholt Park, Ham Ashley, and Fosberry Wood, and you have a picture the most energetic fox-hunter would shrink from. There was one bit of blue in the horizon, which was the beautiful expanse of Salisbury Plain, with its wide stretch of maiden turf, forming the central portions of the hunt, and the nice bit of vale round South Grove. The squire of Tedworth was, however, not a man to be turned away from his purpose by greater difficulties than these—even the refusal of his father to allow him to draw Ashton Coppice (the home covert) amongst them—and, having spent his youth amongst the fascinations of the Midlands, he was determined that he would transform this wild district into a fox-hunting country, spend his income amongst his own tenants instead of strangers—a resolve that all country gentlemen would do well to imitate. That the squire did not come here because he had no longer the nerve to ride in better countries is shown not only by the way he was still able to go

when any unusual obstacle presented itself, but also by the manner in which he rode some years later when he took his hounds on a tour through his old countries by invitation, and had a few days in Leicestershire and Lincolnshire.

Now let us see how he set about the transformation on which he had set his heart, and it will be very evident that he had not scanned the features of the country and estimated its capabilities in vain. In fact, although I have called it the worst country in England, I only mean that it is a country of the worst type or description—not that it is really inferior, now its resources are opened up, to those which immediately surround it; and as hunting was carried on in the Craven and other Hampshire countries, as well as others of a similar character, it was very evident it could be also in the Tedworth.

His first care was to get permission from the owners of coverts to make good ridings through all those large woodlands I have mentioned, save and except those on the south adjoining the New Forest country, where, I believe, he never went himself but once, and declared he would never go again,—a resolve which those who know it will not wonder at, as the small boggy fields, blind, cramped fences, over which you must creep rather than jump, and interminable woodlands, were very ill-suited to his bold, dashing style of riding. In the northern woods, however, he set to work in earnest, and soon had them so well rided, that it was a very easy matter for both him and his whips to reach their hounds, with proper gates and exits to enable them to get away from them. In this the landowners also found their advantage, for not only did he keep everything with which he had any connexion in first-rate order, but the light and air which was thus let into the coverts was of material benefit to the timber. How much labour he must have employed, or money circulated, through these undertakings, it boots not here to mention. We now find him with a very large extent of country got into something like order, and this was the

means he took to ensure sport in it. First of all, he commenced hunting four days a week himself in the best parts; and as it is well known that the more foxes are hunted the more you will have, it was not very long before he was able to increase his own hunting days to six. At the same time, his huntsman went every Wednesday into Wherwell Wood, and every Saturday to the great woodlands to the south; thus, by keeping these strongholds well routed, he sent foxes into the better portions of the hunt, gave his young hounds plenty of work, and, what was of more consequence, prevented the destruction of foxes, which is sure to take place when a covert is not well and regularly hunted. What an influence this must have had on sport will be best understood when I say I have been informed, on good authority, that, in one wood alone, fifty brace of foxes were destroyed in one season since it has ceased to be hunted. This not only increased his own sport, but that of his neighbours, and both the Vine and the Hursley benefited by that large woodland not lying fallow. To his own hounds it was of the greatest advantage, as, by sending all the young and the oldest ones to these places, he kept the pick of the kennel for the best country; and no hound went out in his own pack that was not steady, able to run to head, and do his part in the business of the day. Hence the celebrity of his hounds. It was like commanding a regiment of picked men. As Harry Hieover says, "Nearly all hounds can go individually fast enough." It is the head they carry, and the dash they show, that makes the difference between fast and slow hunting. By thus ordering his country, he not only taught foxes to fly, but drove them out of the large coverts; and from the gorse patches on Salisbury Plain got those short, sharp, and decisive gallops that he had been accustomed to in the shires, lacking only the fencing. Another very favourite resort for foxes is the numerous ozier holts and reed beds to be found all up the sides of the streams which, at intervals of four or five miles, intersect Salisbury Plain. Found in these, there is no shelter in which

a fox can hang; consequently, go he must. Hounds generally get a good start, and a very merry spin is the result, across a country where there is nothing more formidable than a sheep-hurdle to get over. In fact, it is like the Brighton Downs without the hills.

All Mr. Smith's anticipations were amply fulfilled, and, so far from being like many others who have gone from good scenting countries into bad ones and failed, his sport was as good in Hants and Wilts as ever it had been with the Quorn or Burton, if not better. Here we have a plain proof that all countries are capable of showing sport with fox-hounds, provided you have only the right man to hunt them.

It is now time that I went more into the personal history of Mr. Smith as connected with the Tedworth country, and I may say that he settled at Penton Lodge in 1826, being then fifty years old, and, as was stated above, he got together a scratch pack. The next year he bought Sir Richard Sutton's hounds, who made him a present of Rob Roy, saying, "He may ride him, but no one down there could." And truly enough he did ride him, and beat Lord Kintore on him in a good run in the Vale of White Horse, but he had soon become quiet in Mr. Smith's hands. I should have said that, when he came to Penton, he had two hounds of his original pack, Bounty and Soloman, to help him with his draft lot. The next year his father died, and his hunting establishment was removed to Tedworth, and from that date the country may be said to have been fairly established. His first whip at Penton was George Gardener; but, when he got regularly to work at Tedworth, Dick Burton, David Edwards, and Morris Hills were his whips. Carter came when he bought the Duke of Grafton's hounds, in 1842, and he had Tom Day and Charlton also during the thirty years and upwards that he kept hounds at Tedworth. Cowley was first whip in Carter's time, and Jack Fricker, who commenced riding second horse to the Squire, with whom he was as great a favourite as little Will Burton had been in his younger

days, gradually worked up to that place, and had Bill Brice under him during the last years of the Squire. Briggs was his stud groom in early days, and after him came Joseph Lees, who was head of the stables for years, and, after the death of the Squire, set up as a veterinary at Luggershall, where he died in 1871. It will be admitted that this is not a very long list of servants, when we consider the time Mr. Smith was master of the Tedworth country, and, moreover, there is not one amongst them who has not done himself credit in other lands; for, although Jack Fricker is still at Tedworth, he was some years ago paid the compliment of being offered the post of huntsman to the Quorn, although he declined the honour, and preferred to stick to the country in which he had been brought up; while it is somewhat singular that Tom Firr, who was under him in Carter's time, has since gone there, and made himself a great name. It will also tend to show what a just and good master Mr. Smith must have been to retain men of this class so long in his service, when we remember that with them, as with his field, he was at times very rough-tempered. However, as the portrait of Mr. Smith is sketched in "Country Quarters," I shall once more quote from that work:—

"The Squire was not very even-tempered with his men, and once took Lees by the coat-collar and kicked him half-way round the stables because he fomented a horse that was lame (he had been badly staked) with warm water instead of cold, his partiality for which remedy is well known. On another occasion he struck a helper, when the latter returned the blow; so they went into the passage behind the boxes and had a round or two, and the Squire, so far from being offended with the lad, applauded him for having the courage to turn on him, and gave him a sovereign. With his field he was very rough at times, and one day said to a boy, who was mounted on a thoroughbred a good deal above his weight and altogether too much for him, so that he was in danger of passing the Squire going down a

hill, 'Hold hard, will you? hold hard!' The boy said, 'I can't hold my horse, sir.' 'Then, —— your eyes! ride the other way,' rejoined the Squire. But perhaps his answer to an officious tenant was the best of all the many things told of him. He was going to covert on his hack, when a very heavy shower forced him to take shelter under a cart-shed in no amiable mood. The farmer, his own tenant, seeing him there, asked him if he would dismount and go in-doors, and an emphatic 'No!' was the answer. This would have been enough for most who knew the man; but the farmer, still trying to do the agreeable, took a survey of the weather and sagely remarked, 'It comes down now!' 'Didn't expect it to go up, you fool, did you?' was the curt reply. . . . . .

"It is not generally known that, although he was invariably kind to animals, Ayston, his favourite and best horse, had such an inveterate dislike to him that it took two men—and pretty good men too—to hold him while the Squire mounted, or he would have savaged him; and he would continue to come open-mouthed at the bars of his box if Mr. Smith stood near it, at which harmless exhibition of temper the old gentleman used to laugh heartily. It is also, I think, not generally known that Screwdriver obtained his name through falling at a drop into a deep lane, and breaking both his knees. Ham Ashley, Netheravon, Paul Potter, and Blemish were some of his latest horses; and there were few better ones in the stable than Black Diamond, Raglan, or Grey Marlborough, all kept for Jack Fricker's especial riding, as I have heard it said that the Squire's only trouble was that he could not buy horses quite good enough for Jack. Grey Marlborough, as magnificent a horse as man ever sat across, was perfection in a vale, but no man living could hold him in the open. I have heard Jack say he could never account for this, except that perhaps the rattle of horses galloping round and behind him frightened him. He was bought of Mr. John Rowden, who was a great favourite with the Squire, and had such fine hands that he often asked him to

take a particularly fractious one in hand. Fire King belonged to rather an earlier period than some I have named, and pulled so hard that even the Squire was fain to send him home several times before they could get on terms with each other; but, when once an understanding was established, there was no greater favourite in the stable than the slashing, heavily-fired chestnut. Carter was well mounted, but on a different class of horse, and Brunette was as good as anything in his lot, as she had a right to be, from the long figure that was paid for her. A good deal of fun used to be made of him when mounted on Jim Crow or Rainbow, and they certainly did look as fit for the circus as the hunting-field; nevertheless, they were good slaves, and Jim Crow worked on until he had not a leg to stand on. In fact, all the horses were old and infirm at last, as Mr. Smith disliked parting with an old favourite."

At length, the time came when even Mr. Assheton Smith's iron frame could withstand the hand of Time no longer, and in August, 1858, he breathed his last at Vaenol, his seat in Wales, after a long and trying illness, which, however, only for a short time confined him to his room, and thus passed away the greatest and best sportsman England had ever known. His lot was also cast in perhaps the period of our history most conducive to sport, as game preserving was not then carried to the extent it is now, the country was not gridironed by railways, and the huge crowds which gather at any favourite fixture had scarcely then commenced to flock to the covert side, while hounds and horses had received all the improvement of which they were capable.

At his death the country was carried on by a committee, consisting of Sir Edmund Antrobus, Mr. Raikes, of Netheravon, Mr. Fowle, of Chute Lodge, and others I cannot now remember; Mr. John Brewer, of Garlog, acting as secretary, and George Carter for some few years continued to carry the horn, but when age compelled him to resign, it was turned over

to Jack Fricker, who has remained there ever since, and continued to show sport worthy of the school in which he was brought up. George Carter is still alive, and I believe gets out occasionally to have a look at the descendants of his old favourites.

CHAPTER XX.

WILD STAG-HUNTING.

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
To the green wood haste away;
We can show you where he lies,
Fleet of foot and tall of size;
We can show the marks he made
When 'gainst the oak his antlers fray'd;
You shall see him brought to bay.
Waken, lords and ladies gay.

HAD I taken up my pen to write on wild stag-hunting a quarter of a century ago, I should have expected to be looked on as a visionary enthusiast rather than to find readers. Now the case is altered, and hundreds (I may say thousands) have seen the wild red deer bound from his covert on Exmoor; and this noblest and most ancient of all sports is resuscitated, I hope never again to cease until England has become so cultivated and built over that hunting of every sort is a thing of the past.

This, in an age devoted to the battue shooting, game driving, and riding regardless of hounds—an age in which each man's aim in sport seems confined to his own personal glorification—is a good and healthy sign—a sign that the love of sport, for sport's sake alone, is not totally extinct amongst us. True, many go to meet the stag-hounds in North Devon with very little idea what they are going out to see; others go because it has almost become a fashion; more, again, for a ride and the scenery. By the

way, a man who goes for these two things is as some one once said of Wordsworth, very nearly a sportsman. Never mind what motive takes a man to the chase of the wild red deer (even if it be only for once, and he, coming back, pronounces the whole thing dead slow, and swears he will never go again), let him be a man of average sense, and I will lay my life he returns a better sportsman for what he has seen. There is no more hopeful sign for sport at the present day than the increasing love manifested year by year for the once-prized chase of our ancestors. During the two past decades succeeding the introduction of railways, its doom was almost sealed. Now the reaction has come, and I believe even the most prosaic amongst us admit that man was not sent into the world wholly to spin cotton and amass gold. We see that there is a time to work and a time to play, and, like sensible people as we are, when in our right minds, we have caught up again one of those playthings which, from the time man became a carnivorous animal, has been his chief delight. From the earliest ages all nations appear to have had a love (I might almost say a veneration) for the deer. The stag was looked upon not like the camel, the ass, the sheep, or the goat, as the slave of man, but as a noble quarry, exulting in his freedom, difficult to subdue, and conferring honour on him who could boast of having achieved the conquest. From patriarchal days his flesh has been esteemed a delicacy. Was not the capture of the Arcadian hind one of the allotted labours of Hercules? thus proving that the ancients set much store on the skill and strength which could outstrip or circumvent an animal of this glorious species. Neither were they wrong in selecting the hind instead of the stag. There is a world of truth and wisdom in those old Pagan stories, let us be as sceptical of their origin as we may. Danae is not the only virgin who has been lost in a shower of gold, and Arthur Heal would tell us to the present day that a hind will cut out far more work for his five-and-twenty inch flyers than the best stag that ever frayed antler, and take more catching than even a four-year-old male deer,

although I have known the latter run the field and the greater part of the pack out of scent and sight.

Those old heroes liked the venison well enough, and got it either by fair means or foul. Virgil, in the First Book of the Æneid, anticipated Scroope something like eighteen centuries where he says,—

> But on the plain
> Three beamy stags command a lordly train
> Of branching heads; the more ignoble throng
> Attend their stately steps, and slowly graze along.
> He stood, and while secure they fed below,
> He took the quiver and the trusty bow
> Achates used to bear: the leaders first
> He laid along, and then the vulgar pierced;
> Nor ceased his arrows till the shady plain
> Sev'n mighty bodies with their blood distain.

Even Captain Ross, or the late Lord Henry Bentinck, would have called that a fair day's work with the rifle, to say nothing of killing such a holocaust with a bow and arrows. No doubt, in his case, the necessity condoned such wholesale slaughter, but in later times the lords of the creation have been fain to kill for killing sake alone.

We get into the middle ages before we find deer regularly hunted to their death. Even then I fancy they had to run the gauntlet of arrows, cross-bows, and so forth, ere they got a fair start, and occasionally had a brace of deer greyhounds laid on close to their haunches as they broke covert. Hunted, however, they were, beyond all doubt, as we learn that King Richard the First chased a stag from Sherwood Forest to Barnsdale, in Yorkshire, and this must have been done by scent, as at the pace greyhounds or gazehounds would drive a stag, neither he nor his pursuers could last for any number of miles. When the present system first obtained it is now impossible to determine, but we know that, in the days of Gervase Markham, hunting at force, as it was called, which meant without the bounds of a park or other enclosed space set apart for the purpose, was

common, and he speaks of having seen runs of ten or twelve miles from point to point. Then, however, it was still considered the sport for kings and nobles, and beyond the reach of ordinary mortals, though there can be little doubt that in those days deer were abundant in many parts of England. In fact, at the end of the eighteenth century we know that they abounded in the Vale of Belvoir, which was then open and unenclosed, but the historian has not told us whether they were red or fallow deer.

In Hampshire there was a large herd inhabiting Woolmer Forest, and they are thus described by Gilbert White, of Selborne, in a letter which is unfortunately undated:—"Nor does the loss of our black game prove the only gap in the 'Fauna Selborniensis; or Natural History of Selborne,' for another beautiful link in the chain of beings is wanting. I mean the red deer, which, towards the beginning of this century, amounted to about five hundred head, and made a stately appearance. There is an old keeper now alive, named Adams, whose great-grandfather (mentioned in a perambulation taken in 1635), grandfather, father, and self, enjoyed the head-keepership of Woolmer Forest for more than a hundred years. This person assures me that his father has often told him that Queen Anne, as she was journeying on the Portsmouth road, did not think the Forest of Woolmer beneath her royal regard, for she came out of the great road at Liphook, which is just by, and reposing herself on a bank smoothed for that purpose, lying about half a mile to the east of Woolmer Pond, and is still called Queen's Bank, saw, with great complacency and satisfaction, the whole herd of red deer brought by the keepers along the vale before her, consisting then of about five hundred head." A sight this, worthy the attention of the greatest sovereign! but he further adds that, by means of the Waltham Blacks, or, to use his own expression, as soon as they began blacking, they were reduced to about fifty head, and so continued decreasing till the time of the late Duke of Cumberland.

"It is now more than thirty years ago that his highness sent down a huntsman and six Yeoman prickers, in scarlet jackets laced with gold, attended by the stag-hounds, ordering them to take every deer in the forest alive, and convey them in carts to Windsor. In the course of the summer they caught every stag, some of which showed extraordinary diversion; but in the following winter, when the hinds were also carried off, such fine chases were exhibited as served the country people for matter of talk and wonder for years afterwards. I saw myself one of the Yeoman prickers single out a stag from the herd, and must confess that it was the most curious feat of activity I ever beheld, superior to anything in Mr. Astley's riding-school. The exertions made by the horse and deer exceeded all my expectations, though the former greatly exceeded the latter in speed. When the devoted deer was separated from his companions, they gave him, by their watches, law, as they called it, for twenty minutes; when sounding their horns, the stop-dogs were permitted to pursue, and a most gallant scene ensued."

In another place White says, "One thing is remarkable, that, though Holt has been of old well stocked with fallow deer, unrestrained by any pales or fences more than a common hedge, they yet are never seen within the limits of Woolmer, nor were the red deer of Woolmer ever known to haunt the thickets or glades of the Holt." At what time the deer were driven from Windsor Forest into the Great Park, I have not been able to determine, but probably about the same period that Woolmer Forest was cleared of them. Many of my readers will doubtless be surprised to learn that Epping Forest has been inhabited by red deer within the present century; and there is a man now alive who has hunted them. Nevertheless, such is the fact, and I have had particulars of their doings from his own lips, to which I shall refer in another chapter. The last red deer was, he told me, shot in Hainault Forest in 1828, since which time I think I am correct in saying that, save the New Forest in

Hampshire, and Exmoor in Somersetshire, they were nowhere to be found in a wild state in England.

I can remember when Davis brought down the Queen's stag-hounds to hunt the red deer in the New Forest during the April month, though I was not old enough to go out with them. After this was given up, my uncle, the late Mr. Thomas Nevill, of Chilland, lent his pack of bloodhounds to Capt. Williams and Capt. Martin Powell, who also got together the blood-hounds still in the hands of the keepers, and with these hunted the deer in April, 1851, when I have seen some very good runs indeed; but, if my memory serves me correctly, they were not allowed to kill them. Then came the order for the deer to be removed from the New Forest, as they had from Woolmer, though it certainly was not done in such grand style. Some were caught and taken to Windsor, some killed, and their fallow brethren were entirely done away with. Thus a sport, which had existed from the time of the Ancient Britons, was extinguished at one fell blow, and Exmoor became the only place where stag-hunting could be seen in its natural state.

Even then, about this period, it sunk very low, and had not such an energetic man as Mr. Fenwick Bisset taken the helm, the chances are that the poacher would have done his work, and the sport have been for ever lost to us. Having now given a slight sketch of the history of stag-hunting up to the present time, I must proceed to notice those particulars wherein it differs from other kinds of chase, and in no one thing is this more marked than in the time of year at which it is followed, and the fact that the male and female are not indiscriminately pursued at the same period. The custom with the Devon and Somerset now is to commence stag-hunting about the 12th of August, when the stags are in the best condition, and have for the most part lost the velvet from their horns, and the sport is continued until near about the 10th of October, when their necks begin to swell, their flesh becomes strong and offensive, and they seek the hinds. When the deer were not so numerous as at present,

they generally waited ten days or a fortnight before commencing hind-hunting, but of late years the herds have become so large that Mr. Fenwick Bisset loses no time in thinning them, and the hind-hunting commences as soon as stag-hunting ceases. This generally lasts to the end of December or the beginning of January, from whence they are left in peace until August once more comes round, though formerly it was the custom to hunt barren hinds in April and May—a plan in every way to be reprobated, as, notwithstanding the most careful tufting, the breeding mothers must have been disturbed at a period when it was most essential that they should remain quiet, and the stags having lost their horns were occasionally killed by mistake. Mr. Bisset deserves all honour for having suppressed this custom.

According to Manwood's "Forest Laws," the chase of the stag or hart commenced at Midsummer Day, and ended on Holyrood Day, and the hind was hunted from that time until Candlemas Day. Thus we see that the old rule is still carried out with the Devon and Somerset pretty much in its integrity. Turning to George the Third's pack, I believe that they commenced always on Holyrood Day, even when hunting the wild deer, and kept on until Easter Monday, so that, if stags were hunted, they must most assuredly have been weak and out of season. In Epping Forest they began in September, never used tufters, and ran stags and hinds indiscriminately until April or May, though their custom was to stop the hounds from a young deer if the keepers knew of a good one in the neighbourhood. Why, in later days, the Queen's hounds should have hunted red stags in April, I could never understand, as, although they may by that time have, in a measure, recovered their strength from the rutting season, they must be very far indeed from having attained the condition in which they would be found four months later. At no time were the deer in the New Forest so good and strong as those on Exmoor, which is probably to be accounted for by the fact that the forest was so much overstocked with fallow deer.

In spite of forest laws, our ancestors seem to have chased the

hart pretty much all the summer, perhaps looking more to the velvet on the horns (a great delicacy) than to the condition the stag himself was in, as we thus find in Chaucer:—

Me thoghte thus, that hyt was May,
And in the dawnynge, ther I laye
Me mette thus in my bed al naked,
* * * *
And as I lay thus, wonder lowde
Me thoght I herde an hunte blowe,
Tassay hys horne, and for to knowe
Whether hyt were clere, or horse of soune.
And I herde goynge, bothe uppe and doune,
Men, hors, houndes, and other thynge,
And alle men speke of huntynge,
How they wolde slee the hert with strengthe,
And how the hert had upon lengthe
So much embosed, Y not now what.
Anoon ryght whan I herde that,
How that they wolde on huntynge goon,
I was ryght glad; and up anoon
Tooke I my hors, and forthe I wente
Out of my chambre; I never stente,
Til I come to the felde withoute;
Ther overtoke Y a grete route
Of huntes and eke of foresterys,
And many relayes and lymerys;
And hyed hem to the forest faste,
And I with hem. So at the laste
I axed oon ladde a lymere,
'Say, felowe! whoo shal hunte here'
Quod I; and he answered ageyn,
'Sir, themperour Octovyen;'
Quod he, 'and ys here faste by,'
'A goddys halfe, in good tyme!' quod I
'Go we faste!' and gan to ryde.
Whan we come to the forest side,
Every man didde ryht anoon,
As to huntyng fille to doon.
The mayster hunte, anoon, fote hote,
With a grete horne blewe thre mote,

At the uncouplynge of hys houndys.
Withynne a while the herte founde ys'
I—hallowed, and rechased faste
Longe time; and so at the laste
This hart rused, and staale away
Fro alle the houndes a prevy way,
The houndes hadde overshotte hym alle,
And were upon a defaulte yfalle.
Therwyth the hunte, wonder faste,
Blewe a forleygne at the laste.

Here we have a description of the chase in the time of Chaucer, up to what we should term the first check, or perhaps, more probably, that the lymiers and tufters, having done their work, the hart managed, by taking soil, so to beat them as to break covert unviewed and unhunted. Whichever the poet may have intended, the fault to which the hounds are brought gives him the opportunity to break off the chase, and commence a fresh adventure, and, as he says in the next page, "I was go walked from my tree," it is probable that he was in ambush to take a pot shot at the hart, should he pass within range. However, here we distinctly find the month of May named as one in which the hart was hunted, and that by an emperor with all pomp and ceremony. And I cannot think that such a keen man of the world as Dan Chaucer, and one who so noted men and manners, as he has plainly showed us he did, in the "Canterbury Tales," would have fallen into error in this respect, and have made his emperor hunt a hart out of season.

Again, if we come down to a later date, we find Ben Jonson, in the "Forest," says of Sir Robert Worth,—

Or if thou list the night in watch to break,
A-bed canst hear the loud stag speak,
In spring oft roused for thy master's sport
Who for it makes thy house his court;
Or with thy friends, the heart of all the year
Divid'st upon the lesser deer.

This is a clear intimation that, in the reign of James the

First, the stag was hunted in spring, and the buck about Midsummer. Gervase Markham also says, in his "Cavalrie," printed in 1616, in speaking of the chase of the stag or buck as the best for training horses, "The time of the year for these chases is from the middle of May to the middle of September."

I take the time of year in which it can be followed as one of the great recommendations of stag-hunting, especially in the present age, when one and all are accustomed to look upon August and September as especially the holiday months of the year. There are many professional men who can scarcely snatch a day from business during the periods when fox and hare-hunting are in perfection, who at this time can and do make holiday, and by wending their steps to the west are enabled to get an amount of healthy excitement, and horse exercise thrown in, which, save for stag-hunting, would be denied them. I was talking only during the present season to a solicitor, one of a large firm in London, who said, "I am very fond of hunting, and I profess to hunt one day a week at least; but I find generally that if I have had a dozen days with hounds by the end of the season, I am lucky." A six weeks' trip to Dunster, Minehead, or Dulverton, would give him that with stag-hounds alone. Again, take the invalid: there are numbers fond of hunting who cannot bear the cold winds of an English winter and spring, but they may revel in the autumn months amidst the beauties of Cloutsham Ball and Porlock Bay, by exercising a little caution, without fear of injury to their health, and then be off and away to warmer climes ere November brings its frosts and fogs. Neither must we forget the beauty of the scenes amidst which the wild deer makes his home. The red stag is no child of civilization; you cannot cater for his taste by making a trim gorse covert in the corner of a pasture. He must have forest, heath, rock, and hill, if you are to lure him as a tenant. In fact, during the time he is in season, hunting, on account of damage to the crops, could not be carried on, save in a country the greater portion of which had not been reclaimed from a state

of nature. No one will, I imagine, for one moment dispute the beauties either of North Devon or the New Forest in Hampshire, the only places in which, for many years past, it has been possible to see wild stag-hunting; and I feel morally certain that no one who has traversed either of those tracts, and seen a deer unharboured or brought to bay, whose heart will not beat faster at the remembrance, and, he or she will feel a strange longing to renew those associations and once more hear the tantivy sounded or the *mort* blown.

In my opinion the beauty of the scenery amongst which this chase is held is one of its great advantages. Whether it is a reality or only a sham, of course I cannot say; but, in the present age more than any that has yet passed, we are all smitten with the desire of visiting places of beauty, insomuch that between the travelling British and the Americans, what were once real places of retirement and enjoyment have become little better than rural imitations of a huge London hotel. We have spread ourselves over the continent, done the Alps, invaded Italy, and every part that has achieved the least reputation for beauty, at great expense, and left behind us nooks and corners in our own land, which, although they may not have Alpine grandeur or Italian skies, have a quiet beauty of their own, which, when seen unexpectedly, as they occur to us in the chase, are almost more than fairy-like. To see them as they should be seen, there are but two ways: a walking tour with knapsack on back, or to hunt in the country in which they occur. How incomparably superior is the latter it is needless for me to point out to any sportsman. Has not our own bard asked,—

> Where will the wandering chase
> Lead us bewilder'd?

Animated by the pursuit, we penetrate glens, and come amidst beauties which but for hound and horn would be passed unheeded by. The most industrious walker cannot see in a week what the chase can show in a single day. The fisherman, per-

chance, comes nearest to those who hunt, but his whole progress is of so much slower nature, that it is evident he cannot see so many beauties in such a short space of time. It will perhaps be objected on his behalf that this is all in his favour, and that he looks into and appreciates things which those in the headlong rush of the chase would pass over unobserved. This I deny, for I have seen one of the keenest sportsmen who ever handled horn pull up on Winsford Hill to point out to a stranger the beautiful stag's-head moss, and another has on Porlock Hill dismounted to secure a specimen of white heather. There is another advantage the hunting man possesses, which is what I may term almost a right of free warren, to go when and where he likes. Your tourist is hampered by having to put up with guides which he must fee to get at some chosen shrine enclosed in the grounds of a great man, or in following the bent of his inclination, should he leave the high road, he is liable to be looked upon with a very jealous eye by bailiff or gamekeeper, as some poacher or other misdemeanant in prospective. The fisherman, although the hills and glades, where the wild deer haunt and the trout leap, are pretty much open to him, may unwittingly find himself amongst private waters, and reduced to the necessity of begging or buying a ticket. True, this is seldom denied, if given gratuitously, while, of course, in the other case, money can procure all you want; but there is not, after all, that liberty of range the hunting man possesses. Let but the deer make his way to certain reserved grounds, if such is his good choice, and lo! the note of the horn acts as an "open sesame," which there is no withstanding. Keepers who would have sent the solitary tourist quickly to the rightabout become at once your humble servants; gate-keepers and guides throw wide their portals, and are more intent on seeing the kill than on enforcing their regular duties, and entreating backsheesh, which, by the way, under such altered circumstances, would be no easy matter. "No public thoroughfare—trespassers will be prosecuted," however large it may be writ, loses its terrors for

the hunting man in chase, and has but very slight ones on his way to the meet or during the homeward journey. I have hunted over the greatest part of England and some part of Scotland, and never in more than three, or at the outside four, instances have I known a hunting man interfered with in taking a short cut, and then it was by ignorant, purse-proud men of small possessions as regards land. Of course, I am aware that they only do as they do by courtesy, and, as you may say, on their good behaviour; but most men will, I think, bear out what I say. A short cut to the meet, or to save a tired horse a mile or two on the road home, are held ample excuses for taking a route which would not be dreamt of in an afternoon's ride. But this is not all as regards scenery; you not only can go where less favoured mortals cannot, but the exigencies of the chase take you there! This is true of all hunting, but more especially of wild stag (or hind) hunting. I shall never forget one kill I saw near Waters Meet. The stag had taken soil, and so steep was the path from the road above to the river below, that even the hardy Devon and Somerset men (who are by no means accustomed to stick at trifles in this way) dismounted, and, leaving their horses, scrambled down as best they may, holding by boughs and twigs to help them in their descent. When the stream was reached, so closely did the boughs intertwine overhead, that a shade deeper than that of the nave in York Minster was produced. There stood the stag at bay, breast-deep in the stream; behind him a waterfall, with its torrent, like a sheet of silver; every stone, every boulder moss-covered and dripping with moisture; in fact, a tiny waterfall of itself. Around him the baying pack, some swimming, others standing on rocks, while the leafy canopy overhead, aided by the mountain sides, made their melodious voices re-echo again and again. Some dozen men in scarlet just served to light up the scene, and throw in the colouring that made it perfect, were scattered round; and to him who had eyes to see, it seemed like a

hunt in fairy-land. That it was stern and real, the dead deer a few minutes later and the long ride home, only ended by moonlight, proved; but to this day I have never realized how the death-stroke was given, or that we were all men, hounds, and deer, living and acting in the scene. A strange feeling, such as Kingsley's friend Claude felt at a sight of the herd, when he says he had been "staring stupidly at them, trying in vain to take in the sight, with the strangest new excitement heaving and boiling up in my throat; and at the sound of their hoofs on the turf I woke, and found the keeper staring not at them, but at me, who, I verily believe, had something very like a tear in the excitable eyes of mine."

No doubt you had, Claude. I felt much the same when first that vision beneath the waterfall burst on my sight, or rather when I had time to drink in its full volume of beauty. As I have said, how that deer was killed I know not; sufficient is it that I saw him dragged to land and "the hounds' fee" distributed. Here was one—nay, two pictures—comprised within the space of ten minutes, such as no artist ever painted, or ever will paint, not even Landseer himself.

Yet they tell us there is no poetry in sport! Is there not? Let him who hath eyes to see and ears to hear, hear. I have seen it advanced, on the authority of Charles Kingsley, that the poetical side of sport should be ignored, because, he said, "We English owe too much to our field-sports to allow people to talk nonsense about them." True, but did he talk nonsense when, in his "North Devon," owning that he had "never even ridden with these same staghounds," he gives us such a poetical description of a run, as for truthfulness of feeling, as well as fact, would leave Somerville and Scott both in the shade? No poetry in sport! Why did I, although no poet, thank heaven that I could ride the twenty miles home alone, after the scene I have so vainly endeavoured to describe, and drink in its beauties again and again without interruption? Why does it come back

to me now in after-years, as passages of Shakespeare or Milton will come back, like fairy visitors, welcome though unbidden?

No poetry in sport! Truly, not to the man whose sole object in it is to kill, or ride harder than his neighbour, jump more fences, have more falls, or sell his horses at a higher figure, and slaughter more game driven to his gun. He is truly a great man in his way; so was, in older times, your man who could drink four bottles while his friend succumbed at two. Neither, I fancy, exactly know or knew what they were doing, or derived the highest enjoyment from potations or sport. The man who knows exactly when the flavour begins to pall upon the palate has aimed at the true Anacreontic or poetical view, if such there can be, of drinking, which the four-bottle man passes by on the other side unheeded. So do those who merely hunt to ride, or shoot to slay, lose all the true poetry of sport. It is there if they will seek it—the soul which animates the body, to be found and appreciated, if carefully sought for, yet denied to so many. Without it all sport is mere butchery. But where have I wandered, from the death scene at Waters Meet?—a scene few are ever likely to visit. To the fisherman it would be a *terra incognita*, for he could not throw, neither could he spin, amidst its branches. Of the tourists, who would seek its deep and pathless recesses, save those few who were first of all startled, and then led on by horn and hound on this occasion?

I believe that when once the strange visitors were gone, silence settled, "calm and still," on the place again, only to be disturbed by the splash of the fish, the plunge of the otter, the songs of birds overhead, or the rush into the pool, when the great stag comes there to soil.

Enough: let me now turn to wild stag-hunting, simply as a sport, and nothing more. Perhaps I cannot do this better than by quoting what I wrote on this subject in "Baily's Magazine," December, 1875, slightly altering it here and there to suit my present purpose:—

"First let me tell my hard-riding readers, if I have the luck to have such, that they must by no means look for the quick find and eager start that is so much appreciated in the grass countries. The law is, in stag-hunting, that the oldest and heaviest deer, generally synonymous terms, must be found, hunted, and, if possible, killed. This is the true science of woodcraft, as handed down to us for generations; hence the necessity of tufting, which I have so often heard abused and decried. No doubt it is annoying to see deer after deer break covert and the hounds stopped because the 'old stag,' well known by the harbourer to be there, refuses to make his appearance; but if those who go to meet stag-hounds would accept the tufting as a part and parcel of the proceedings instead of as a mere preliminary, as too many of them do, they would rejoice in the skill of the men and the discipline of the hounds, which enables one of the most difficult of sporting feats to be accomplished, instead of looking on it simply as so much time wasted, and a bore.[1] For those who have never hunted anything but carted deer, it is almost impossible to conceive the cunning and resources of an old stag to save himself from being forced from

[1] The harbourer's duties are thus described in an old work on hunting:—

"I am the Hunt, which rathe and early rise,
(My bottell filde with wine in any wise),
Two draughts I drinke, to stay my steps withall,
For each foote one, because I would not fall,
Then take my Hound, in liam me behind,
The stately Hart in fryth or fell to find.
And whiles I seeke his slotte where he hath fedde,
The sweet byrdes sing to cheare my drowsie head.
And when my Hound doth straine upon good vent,
I must confesse the same doth me content;
But when I haue my couerts walkt about,
And harbred fast, the Hart for comming out;
Then I returne to make a graue report,
Whereas I find th' assembly doth resort
And lowe I crouch before the Lordlings all,
Out of my Horne the fewmets let I fall,

his covert. Neither hare nor fox ever tries so many wiles to escape his pursuers as a stag, and often he will range the covert until not another deer is left in it; run the streams and 'soil' again and again before making up his mind to set his head over the open. This, of course, gives both hounds and huntsman a great deal of work, for it is only by keeping constantly at him, when once on his legs, that this end can be achieved. However, when he has made up his mind to go, he is not easily 'blanched,' and, moreover, he has a point to make, and make it he will; so, we know, will the fox, but he is not nearly so bold in doing it as the stag. It will be seen that drawing for a fox and tufting for a deer is a totally dissimilar affair, and no comparison can, in our estimation, be instituted between them. The huntsman to fox-hounds simply draws the most likely places with his whole pack, hunts the first fox he finds, as a rule (unless a brace break at once), and kills him, if he can. The stag-hunter (his deer having previously been harboured in a particular covert) takes a few hounds, four or five couple generally, and from the covert, perhaps full of other deer, and often of very great extent, singles and forces into the open the

> And other signes and tokens do I tell,
> To make them hope the Hart may like them well.
> Then they command that I the wine should taste,
> So biddes mine Art, and so my throat I baste.
> The dinner done, I go straightwayes againe,
> Vnto my markes, and shew my master plaine.
> Then put my Hound vpon the view to drawe,
> And rowse the Hart out of his layre by lawe.
> O gamsters all, a little by your leaue,
> Can you such ioyes in trifling games conceaue?"

There is a capital account of the harbourer's duties in modern times in Dr. Collyns's book on "The Chase of the Wild Red Deer in Devon and Somerset," and Whyte Melville's "Katerfelto," where Red Rube the Harbourer is a perfect sketch. In the present day the lyme-hound is not used, and the harbourer depends on his own knowledge of woodcraft and habits of the animal he is in pursuit of.

particular stag he wishes to hunt. Can any one question which is the most scientific operation, and requires the deepest knowledge of woodcraft? There is no finer sight in the world than an old stag when leaping forth to view in all his majestic beauty. He stands at gaze a moment, and then gliding into his long, easy stride, which looks so slow, but really is so fast, so takes advantage of the inequalities of the ground, that he is out of sight, apparently, on an open plain, ere you can believe it. Turn your head but for a moment, and he is lost to the eye until set up, or fresh found at least. Do you think he was afraid of us? Not one jot!

"A friend told me he saw one found near Eggesford, who broke into the field where the horsemen had all been drawn up in line, gazed at them a moment from the boundary fence, and then trotted along from end to end, like a general reviewing a regiment of cavalry, and away. It is not easy for any one who has not passed his life amongst them, to tell a good deer from a light one, or to see what his rights are; so that if you are a stranger, your wisest plan is to hold your tongue; if you can distinguish a stag from a hind with certainty at some little distance, it is about as much as you will do at first. Nevertheless, that my readers may know how deer should be termed at different ages—a point on which many would be glad of information if they only knew where to go for it—I transcribe the following from the 'Boke of Hunting,' a part of the 'Boke of St. Alban's,' written by Lady Juliana Berners, prioress of Sopewell Nunnery, near St. Alban's, in the thirteenth century, and first printed at St. Alban's in 1481:—

> And to speke of the hert, if ye will it here,
> Ye shall call him a calfe at the first yere,
> The second yere a brocket; so shall he be
> The third yere a spayard, lerneth this at me;
> The fourth yere calles him a stagge, be any way
> The fifth yere a grete stagge, my Dame bade you say.

"Manwood, in his 'Forest Laws,' also bears out these terms,

except that in the fourth year he calls him a staggard, in the fifth a stag, but adds, 'that in times past, the foresters and woodmen were wont to call him stag at the fourth yeer, and not a staggard, as we do now. And also at the fifth yeer they do call him a great stag. And so they were wont to give him a difference by this word of stag and great stag. And whereas some do think that a stag, of what age soever he be, shall not be called a hart until the king or queen do hunt him; that is not so, for they are greatly deceived that so do think; for after the fifth yeer of his age he should no more be called a stag, but a hart; and as Budæus saith, at six yeers of age, then a hart you shall him call; so that if a stag come to be six yeers of age, then he is a hart.' In Devonshire they are now called, first a calf, then a knobbler or brocket, afterwards a spire or pricket; in the fourth year a staggart; in the fifth a stag or warrantable deer; at and after six, a stag or hart. As we learn from 'The Chase of the Wild Red Deer,' Hinds are, first year a calf, the second a brocket's sister or hearst, in the third a young hind or hind.

"When the stag has been unharboured and fairly driven into the open, the fox-hunter will notice another material difference from the chase to which he has been used. With the fox all is bustle and excitement (too much so sometimes) to get the hounds on his line. Here it is different, for the stag can be hunted any reasonable length of time after he is gone. Hence, the first thing is to head and stop the tufters; that being done, the huntsman goes for his pack, kennelled, perhaps, in some outhouse two or three miles away, either bringing them back to where the tufters were stopped, or laying them on the line at some more favourable point, according to his judgment. Arthur Heal, the present huntsman to the Devon and Somerset, gets his hounds on the line much more quickly than was formerly the fashion. With a light deer this, no doubt, gives them a great advantage, and a better chance of bringing him to hand, but, as a rule, the result is shorter chases (at least, so say the

natives) than they had in former days, and old, heavy stags are quickly run up.

"In the chase of the stag, hounds run in a very different form and manner than when hunting the fox, and, instead of going in a body, so that, to use the old familiar term, 'a sheet might cover them,' they almost invariably tail, and there is not that dashing and driving for the lead, which gives such zest and excitement to a run with fox-hounds. For this, I think, many causes may be assigned, one of the principal ones being that the scent is so much stronger than that of the fox, that the leading hound is seldom off the line, and, in consequence, has not to try and fling for it, as he would in a fox-chase; hence, a lead once gained is seldom lost until the hounds are stopped or a regular check ensues. Moreover, a stag, being a bolder animal, runs much straighter than a fox; I do not mean merely from point to point (as I have seen a cunning old stag dodge like a hare), but that he is not so given to slightly divert his course at every trifling obstacle as a fox, and the foremost hounds do not, in consequence, so often overrun the line, and give those behind a chance to pick it up and take the lead from them. Any man who has watched fox-hounds in chase has seen the leading hounds suddenly drop back, and some of their followers on one side or the other go away with the line at a slight angle to the one previously traversed, without an actual check occurring, where hounds are not over-ridden; when they are, the whole pack are driven over it, and throw up. This is where the fox, from his timid, sensitive nature, has, from some cause, slightly altered his course, but not the point to which he was making, and occurs very frequently in all runs. With deer it is not so, at least as far as my experience goes; hence, the leading hounds do not so often come back to their fellows. Loss of start, or momentary hindrances, cannot be made up, and a tail is the result. Perhaps I could better illustrate my meaning by comparing the course of the stag, whether he describes a circle, straight line, or triangle, as resembling the

firm lines made on a map by the aid of ruler and compasses; that of the fox to the same line attempted without their aid by a shaky and unskilful hand.

"The influence of this on hounds will be apparent to any sportsman. Another thing is, I believe, the difference in scent between deer and fox; the former probably, hanging higher in the air, does not appear to be affected by hounds passing over the line, and those can enjoy it who have not the actual lead, thus rendering them more independent of being in front than with the fox, where it is very evident the foremost rank have the best of it, and, knowing this, they are all so emulous for the lead. If it is not so, why cannot fox-hounds run when a hound or a couple has stolen away a field or two ahead, or a cur chased the fox? With deer I believe it makes very little difference to the pack if a tufter has escaped the vigilance of the whip, and gone forward on the line. Dr. Collyns says of the old stag-hounds: 'Like all hounds I have ever seen hunting deer in this country, they ran almost in a line, one after another, not carrying a head like fox-hounds, but each hound apparently revelling in the scent and doing his work for himself, not putting faith in his neighbour, but trusting to his own nose, and to that alone.' I have noticed exactly the same thing with the hounds now used, and they are merely fox-hounds drafted for oversize (they average twenty-five inches) from the best kennels in England; *they*, at any rate, cannot be accused of want of dash. Whatever may be the solution, so it is, and a certain amount of interest is lost to the actual chase over the open, as no one can deny that it is more exciting to see hounds racing for the lead than following each other contentedly, like ducks. It must not for a moment, however, be imagined that on this account pace is wanting. You will find that it takes your very best nag all his time to live with the Devon and Somerset over the open, if you ride up to them. I remember an instance of a gentleman going there from Northamptonshire, who, it was said, at first complained that the hounds did not go fast

enough to extend his horses; the fact was, some easy days and short-running deer deceived him. The time came at last when he had the satisfaction of seeing them run right away from him in the open, while his horse had been so well extended that he laid down to rest in the heather ere going home, and his master thought he intended to die; but the horse altered his mind, if such was his intention, and recovered. No one who started with the hounds saw the end of that run, as they could not get near enough for the tail hound to guide them on the line, but several went miles farther than he did.

"Checks are of less frequent occurrence with deer than fox, as is natural from the higher scent. When they occur it is generally either from the deer having 'taken soil,' that is, gone to water, where he frequently sinks himself all but his nostrils, roused another deer, and taken possession of his lair, or thrown himself down in gorse or high heather with a bound, as a hare will do, without rousing another deer. Perhaps he may have gone up or down the water, or, soiled, and retraced his steps from his soil, 'backed it,' as they say in Devonshire, into a neighbouring covert. As I am not writing a treatise on the best mode of hunting the stag, but merely endeavouring to point out to my readers the difference between the chase of the deer and the fox, I shall not enter into a description of the huntsman's duties under either circumstance, but content myself with warning them not too hastily to consider that all is over, and the deer lost. The check, when it does come, will probably be a long one, but I believe it is Mr. Bisset's maxim that a stag should never be given up while there is daylight. Of course, if he has roused a young deer, the hounds are stopped as soon as it is discovered, and brought back to the point where it is most probable the stratagem was effected. After a time he is again roused, all the stiffer for his respite, and is then said to be 'fresh found.' This will sometimes occur more than once in the course of a run. At water some very beautiful hunting may occasionally be seen, where it is shallow, the hounds trying

every yard of bank and overhanging leaf, or actually giving tongue in the water if the stag is above them. To a man really fond of the work of hounds, nothing can be more enjoyable than this part of the chase, though those who only go out to ride may deem it slow. The way in which I have seen a single hound work a stream is something wonderful. Now, the chase may be over or not; sometimes the deer soils merely to refresh himself, and goes on again, so that it is best to be on the alert for a second start. I have known a very smart gallop indeed after a deer had been running up and down the Baile for a long time, eventually killing him some distance away in the Exe. By the way, this reminds me of the advice given me by an old stag-hunter, which is well worth remembering, viz., 'Never go down into the bottoms unless the stag is sinking.' It is a maxim that will save your horse considerably. Another, taken from the 'Chase of the Wild Red Deer,' is also well worth repeating, which is, that when you see a deer try to ascend a hill perpendicularly, he is 'embost,' 'run up,' or beaten, and is sure to return to water again.

"Very different from the death of the fox is that of the stag. Perhaps for half an hour the pack have been viewing him in the river; at one time 'set up,' at another flying from pool to pool for shelter, and yet he is not beaten enough for the men to go in and cut his throat; for you must know that a stag at bay is a dangerous customer both to hounds and men.

"Whyte Melville says,—

> While louder and deeper the challenge resounds,
> Till it rings through the coombe in a chorus of hounds,
> And the music of death with its echo surrounds
> The King of the West.

"And of all the hound music that ever greeted your ears, there is nothing to equal the chiding of the pack when their stag is set up; he must be cold-souled indeed whose blood does not boil when he hears it. Then, if it is succeeded by

the smothered growl, that tells he is pulled down quickly, and the huntsman's knife is sharp and sure, well and good. Occasionally—nay, often—the stag takes to the cliffs and goes out to sea, when a boat generally tows him in either to Lynmouth, Porlock, or Minehead, and he is killed at once."

Stag-hunting comprises some of the characteristics of every other kind of chase, and yet is essentially different from them all. For instance, hounds must at one time run their hardest to bring him to bay; at another, hunt as patiently as harriers, and own the line on dry rocks or roads, then take the water like otter-hounds; and, moreover, must be handy to stop and turn when the hunted deer forces a younger one to take his place; thus it is the most perfect of any hunting that can be seen, as it comprises so many different styles of chase in one, and it only wants hounds to press to head to make it perfect. But I suppose nothing in this world ever was or will be quite perfection. Whyte Melville, in "Katerfelto," says,—

"One notable peculiarity of this wild stag-hunting of the West is the impossibility of calculating on the endurance of a red deer. A light-going hart, four or five years old, unencumbered by flesh, and with the elasticity of youth in every limb, can naturally skim the surface of his native wastes like a creature with wings; but it is strange that on occasion, though rarely, a stag should be found, with branching antlers to prove his maturity, and broad, well-furnished back, to denote his weight, that can yet stand before a pack of hounds toiling after him, at steady three-quarters' speed, over every kind of ground, for twenty, and even thirty, miles on end. We can gauge to a nicety the lasting qualities of our horse—we have a shrewd guess at about what stage of the proceedings even such staunch hounds as Tancred and Tarquin must begin to flag; but the powers of a hunted stag defy speculation, or, as old Red Rube observed in his more sober and reflective moments, 'Tis a creatur three parts contrairiness and only a quarter venison.

Why, even I can't always tell ye were to vind 'un, nor which road he'll think well to travel, nor how fur he'll go. Them as made 'un knows, I'll warrant; but there's many a deer lies in the forest as is one too many for Red Rube.'"

No man knew better what he was writing about than the author of "Katerfelto," and many a day have I seen him going over the forest, as he goes everywhere, in front. Stag-hunting, is, in its incidents, in the way in which it must be carried out, essentially different from fox-hunting. There, "short, sharp, and decisive" is and should be the motto. With the deer, deep knowledge of woodcraft, great patience, and untiring energy must be brought into play. A day's work is often done before the right animal is unharboured, and then you may kill him in half an hour. But let those inclined to grumble reflect, as they look on the mighty antlers and form, large as a pony, when the King of the Forest lies dead before them, on the science and knowledge of hunting which has been brought into play to kill an old hart, who for years has set the woodcraft of the West at defiance, and ranged these wilds, most probably unhunted, until, foiled in every shift, he at last yielded, because through his own cunning he had lived a life of ease until he was too fat to run. Why, he could have given any fox that ever wore brush twenty-one pounds for cunning. You may have lost your gallop for the day; but, nevertheless, you have seen stag-hunting as much as you will have when a "warrantable deer" succumbs after a gallop of two or three hours. By the way, I fancy people are most unreasonable in regard to deer. Because they go out to hunt a stag, they think a run must follow perforce. Let me ask them how often are they disappointed with fox or hare? also, why a wild deer should *always* be expected to show sport more than any other beast of chase?

That they do so oftener than most is a fact I can vouch for, as, out of a given number of days with hounds, I have met with fewer disappointments in wild-deer hunting

and a larger average of good runs than in any other kind of sport; and as every day's hunting I have had for years has been described in the public papers, there are the recorded facts to speak for themselves, and open to the inspection of the world.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OLD STAG-HOUND.

How the chorus peal'd and gather'd
To an organ's tone!
How the horses steam'd and lather'd,
But to hold their own!
Like a burst of angry weather
In the tempest's frown,
How the pack at head together
Swept across the down!

It may appear somewhat ridiculous to waste space on a hound which has for something like fifty years ceased to exist amongst us; nevertheless, as there are enthusiastic stag-hunters still, it may interest some of them to know with what manner of hound our ancestors pursued this, the noblest of all the beasts of chase. Moveover, so much mystery has already been thrown around the character and pedigree of these once-celebrated animals, that it cannot be altogether uninteresting to real lovers of the dog to endeavour to unravel the skein of fiction which has been woven, and endeavour to tell them what kind of hound the stag-hound really was, and from what source he was originally derived. As far as I have been able to learn, all writers on hounds who have mentioned him in this century assert, as with the fox-hound, that he is the result of a cross, and the hypothesis set forth by some of them is ridiculous enough—in fact, according to their account, he must have been the most vile mongrel in existence, and no sane man could have expected to get three puppies alike from the same litter.

This is how "Shamrock," writing in the *New Sporting Magazine* for April, 1840, asserts that the Massy buck-hounds, which he designates as the "crack pack of that day," were bred:—"They were a cross of the Irish wolf-hound, the Irish bloodhound, and the Spanish dark red bloodhound; and they were afterwards crossed upon the large English bull-dog, and partook of that animal's appearance in their silky coats, and large and deep-set under-jaws." What a likely cross this must have been to produce *hounds*, any one who has had any experience in breeding can imagine. Yet the same writer, a few lines on, tells us, "Of these hounds and their nose, one anecdote, which many living can attest, may not be deemed out of place. In running their game over the Tipperary mountains, night very often came on, and when darkness precluded hunting any longer, the hounds were stopped (by riding before them and cracking a whip), a stake was then placed in the ground as a mark, and the hounds were brought to the spot next morning, and in most instances succeeded in taking up the scent and recovering their game." From the description of Windsor, in the same article, I come to the conclusion that, so far from being a set of mongrels, they were no other than the true stag-hound, the same as were to be found in the Royal kennels up to 1815. "Windsor, who deserved the name of 'Ultimus Romanorum,' was the noblest buck-hound I ever saw (although I have been in their celebrated company almost from my infancy). His colour was white, with a small spot of yellow upon each ear, and a large mark of the same colour upon his right flank. He was about thirty inches high, and showed all the points of that lordly breed, having the full and kindly eye, heavy dew-lap, immense forepart, and somewhat cat ham, which belonged to their pristine form." This is, as near as may be, a description of the old stag-hound, and such, no doubt, Windsor was, though he had such an extraordinary pedigree allotted him. As this hound was bred about 1820, he must have been very nearly the last of the old race in the British Isles.

Some articles appeared in the *Field* in the spring of 1872, by Count Conteux de Canteleu, on French hounds, and one on the smooth hounds of Vendée convinced me that here we must look for the origin of the old stag-hound. In a conversation I had with Mr. John Darby, of Rugby, who remembered the stag-hounds in Epping Forest, as well as Mr. Shards, when he had them at Little Somborne House in Hampshire, he described them as beautiful hounds, full of symmetry and power, but not like fox-hounds, and as being what he termed "pointer-fleshed dogs, and having what in the horse we should call a stallion look about them." To make sure that there should be no mistake, I got a drawing very carefully made from the portrait of Mirliton, a smooth Vendée hound, the property of Viscount A. D'Ousemburg, which appeared in the *Field* of January 27th, 1872, and showed it to Mr. Darby without telling him what it was, or how I had got it, when he immediately exclaimed, "Where did you get that? That is one of the old stag-hounds we were talking about. Take it and show it to old Bob Rounding at Woodford Wells, who hunted them, and see if he does not say so." That I did, and Mr. Rounding also recognized it as being like the hounds he used to hunt. The white Vendée hounds were originally the white St. Hubert's, and in the French hounds of the nineteenth century we find that one called Sorrillard was put to a pointer bitch from Italy. "From this union resulted a white puppy with a fawn-coloured patch on his shoulder. He was named *Greffier*, after the owner of his dam, and became such an excellent hound that few stags escaped him. The thirteen whelps of which he was successively the sire, and which proved as fine and excellent as himself, formed the illustrious breed of *Greffier's*, which was well confirmed in all its characters by the time of Francis the First's accession to the Throne."

I can easily understand how an infusion of pointer blood would, as it were, stir up the slow, pottering St. Hubert, give him more dash, and detracting, perhaps, little or nothing from

his nose, cause him to hunt in a bolder style. But the breed was not quite formed yet, for the king, finding the Greffiers rather deficient in stature, "increased their size by a new cross with a hound called Mirand," presented to him by Admiral d'Annefault. Henry the Second again modified this breed by new crosses with a white hound named Barraud, which had been given him by the Queen of Scotland, Mary de Guise, the mother of Mary Stuart. "Thus was formed a breed stronger than the original Greffiers," and "suitable hounds for a king." "As tall as greyhounds, they had heads as fine as those of pointers."

Of course, as to what breed Barraud may have been, we know nothing, but I think there is a strong probability that he was no other than one of the fleet northern hounds, since known as the English fox-hound; and if so, no doubt to him in a great measure is to be attributed the pace and dash which enabled the great white hounds to perform the feats recorded of them.

These may appear apocryphal, and the following, taken from the same source as what I have before said of them, would seem scarcely credible, did we not remember that there are deer and deer, and that a very heavy stag can scarcely live longer before hounds than a fat bullock would. I have seen a brace killed by the Devon and Somerset in a very short time—in fact, after being tufted for, and forced into the open, they stood scarcely any time before hounds; and I once heard a good harbourer say that he would be bound, when a very heavy deer was forced away, to run him down with a team of Clumbers. This is no disparagement to the deer; if Mr. Grace led the life of an alderman for a time, he would scarcely be the cricketer he is. "The speed of the French hounds," as stated in the *Etats de Venerie*, "was so great that we are astonished at it now. The most vigorous stags did not last more than three quarters of an hour before the hounds of Louis XIV., at the time when this king, in the plenitude of his youth and health, did not object to fast hunting as he afterwards did. It was no uncommon feat to run

down a stag in half an hour, and with the great white hounds three or four were often killed in succession. Thus, on 3rd of November, 1864, 'Monseigneur' went forth with 'Madame' from Fontainebleau, at eight in the morning, and ran down two stags before noon: from there they went at three hours' distance to join the king, who witnessed from his carriage the taking of a third stag, after which Monseigneur cast for a fourth animal, which he took, and was back at the castle by four o'clock. I do not believe," says Dangeau, in relating this exploit, "that it ever happened that four stags could be run down one after another on the same day in so short a space of time. The following year, on St. Hubert's Day, Monseigneur took two stags between seven in the morning and mid-day, and the king saw two more taken in the afternoon by the same hounds. To take a stag in an hour, or two stags one after another, seemed at the time quite as natural as to single out and run down a particular one in a forest numbering two huudred heads of warrantable stags all on foot at the same moment." We may feel inclined to exclaim with Lord William Lennox, "Here's sport indeed!" but when we look at the date, the 3rd of November, we should in England, at least, discount the performance very considerably, for, by that time, the best deer would have become weak and worn out by the rut, and quite unable to stand before such hounds as these appear to have been, while if they were not exhausted, they would be quite as ready to turn and show fight as run.

I have no wish to disparage the performance of the hounds, but my experience of hunting wild deer tells me that, unless they were very heavy deer or out of season, no hounds ever yet bred would kill four in a day on Exmoor and its surrounding heaths. No doubt many will ask (supposing my surmise to be right) how these hounds, so much esteemed in the royal kennels of France, could have become common in England. There is no authority for saying that they were common, but when we remember the intense love of the Stuarts for the chase, and the

intercourse that took place between the Courts of France and England while they were on the throne, the marriage of Charles the First with the daughter of the King of France, and the residence of Charles the Second abroad after the rebellion, I think it is easy enough to see how they may have found their way into the royal kennels, and there, in the royal chase of Exmoor, and in Epping Forest, is the only place that we have distinct evidence of them in England, though the author of "French Hounds of the Nineteenth Century" asserts his belief that they certainly did find their way in some numbers to both England and Ireland, and in the latter country were known as Kerry Beagles. If not identical—and they may, I admit, have been modified by a cross of English blood, in some instances over here—they were evidently very similar; there is scarcely a line written of these French hounds that would not apply to the old Devonshire stag-hounds.

Doctor Collyns, of Dulverton, who hunted with them and knew them well, says, "A nobler pack of hounds no man ever saw. They had been in the county for years, and had been bred with the utmost care for the express purpose of stag-hunting. What the exact origin of this breed was, I am unable to state with accuracy. The bloodhound and old Southern hound, however, were beyond doubt amongst the ancestors of the pack, which, when sold, consisted of about thirty couples. In height, the hounds were about twenty-six to twenty-eight inches; colour generally hare-pied, yellow, yellow and white or badger-pied, with long ears, deep muzzles, large throats, and deep chests. In tongue they were perfect, and, when hunting in water or on half-scent, or baying a deer, they might be heard at an immense distance. Even when running at speed they gave plenty of tongue, and their great size enabled them to cross the long heather and rough sedgy pasturage of the forest without effort or difficulty. The hills and woods of Devon and Somerset will never again ring to the melody of such a pack."

In another place he says, in speaking of scent (and thus

bears out, in a measure, what I have advanced in a previous chapter, on the strong scent of the deer), "You may hunt deer successfully in almost any state of wind or weather. I have seen many splendid runs on a bright, still, gaudy day, and as many when the wind has been blowing almost a hurricane, the deer caring nothing about it, or rather enjoying it, and running for miles *against* it. I have known the old stag-hounds stopped for more than an hour during a thunderstorm; yet they acknowledged the scent when the storm was over (though the rain had been heavy), and, what is more, recovered their deer; yet such a storm and check would have been fatal to a run with fox-hounds or harriers."

I have been told by an old man at Dulverton, that he has stood there and heard these old stag-hounds run over Hawkridge, four miles distant.

"For courage, strength, speed, and tongue, they were unrivalled. Like the game they pursued, they never *appeared* to be putting forth all their powers of speed, and yet few horses could live with them in the open. Their rarest quality, perhaps, was their sagacity in hunting in water. Every pebble, every overhanging bush or twig which a deer might have touched, was quested as they passed up or down stream, and the crash with which the scent, if detected, was acknowledged and announced made the whole country echo again. Nor must I forget to notice the staunchness with which they pursued their game, even when the scent had been stained, by the deer passing through a herd of his own species, or through fallow deer in a park. Wonderful, indeed, was the unerring instinct they displayed in carrying on the scent, disregarding the lines which, spreading right and left around the track of the hunted deer, would, it might be supposed, have been fatal to their power of keeping on the foot of their quarry. Like all hounds I have ever seen hunting deer in this country, they ran almost in a line, one after the other, not carrying a head, like fox-hounds, but each hound apparently revelling in the scent, and doing his

work for himself, not putting his faith in his neighbour, but trusting to his own nose, and that alone." Compare the following from Gaffet de la Briffardière, and we shall see that they were like the white Vendée hound in something more than size and colour:—"I have had a life-long experience of them, not only in the royal kennels, where they are exclusively kept, but in all packs belonging to the princes and noblemen of my time: and I can certify that when these hounds are well entered once for all, you can do what you like with them. I have often seen them in a hunt keep from change altogether. I have seen them separate a brocket from a herd, single out an animal they had chased for scarcely an hour from amongst a number of others by which he was accompanied, and, having well kept his track, separated him from the rest without having lost him for one single moment, put him out of wind, and run him down at last. At Compiègne, where the change is difficult to avoid, I have seen, out of thirty couple, more than forty hounds stick to their right animal, although at every minute other stags bounded across their path, when they, scarcely turning their noses aside, passed on, sticking closely to the right track." I fear this grand race is almost extinct in France, though I have not heard what efforts have been made there to recover the breed since Count Conteux de Canteleu called attention to their merits.

The Royal pack was sold to Colonel Thornton in 1815, who took them abroad. In 1825 the Devon and Somerset were sold to Mr. Shard to hunt carted deer, as I have already said; and in 1827 or 1828 they also were sold at Tattersall's, and went abroad. Thus the stag-hound died out from English soil.

Colonel Mellish, as is said above, had a pack of the lemon and white stag-hounds, and hunted wild deer with them in Epping Forest up to the year 1805, when they were sold to the Devon and Somerset Hunt; but a draft was left behind, and they went on and hunted with them in the forest. Lord Mornington was master for a time; then they were given up for a year and a half, or so; but about 1815 Mr. Rounding took

them, and they were kept up until 1821 or 1822, when they were suffered to drop, though a few of the hounds were given to the keepers in the forest, and the last, I believe, was in the hands of General Grosvenor, of Reindeer Lodge. He was so fond of him that he asked Mr. Rounding to give him to him, and after a time he did; but, unfortunately, they could not breed from him, as he had been castrated. His name was Gamester; he was instrumental in taking a sheep-stealer. A farmer, Mr. Powell, of Loughton, lost a sheep, and John Atherell, the keeper, went with Gamester to the place from whence it was taken, found where it had been slaughtered, and put Gamester on the line, who kept working on until he came to a pond, when he went in as deep as his chest, put his head down, and pulled up the sheep's entrails. This encouraged them, and he went on with the line across the river into Hainault, where he came to a cottage and would not leave it; so they took the liberty of searching, and there found the remains of the sheep. The man was taken, tried, and convicted. Gamester never opened, although he stuck to the line.

I saw a picture of Mr. T. Rounding, painted by Cooper, on Spanker, a chestnut thoroughbred horse, taken when he was twenty-nine years old, with a couple of the old stag-hounds, Governess and Gladsome, and Syren, a fox-hound, bred by Sir Bellingham Graham, with him. This Spanker was ridden by Robert Rounding 500 miles in ten days, and the poor old fellow was killed at last by the man's filling him with pollard when he came in from grass. Mr. Rounding says,—

"When we found a deer, they would not hang, but would get away over the forest; and if they were too young, we took them and turned them out again. We commenced in September, and hunted stags and hinds all the winter up nearly till May, but the stags would not run so well. The keepers harboured them for us, and we drew with the whole pack, and sometimes stopped them, if we roused a young deer, and drew again. They would hunt all through the fallow deer, and take

no notice; I could soon tell if we were right, when a hound challenged that I knew. We had very long runs, all over Essex, and they went a good pace when there was a scent. The forest was about 12,000 acres, and there was no road but what there was a gate to. There was a Lord Warden and a Bridle Ranger. Once we caught a stag and hind, and sent them to the Royal kennels in George the Fourth's reign. We hunted in green coats."

Here our conversation with the veteran ceased, and when he is gone there will be no one, we expect, living who can remember much of the old stag-hounds. An impression seems to have been prevalent that these hounds were slow and pottering. Let us hear what the Rev. J. Russell says on the subject. Turning to his memoir in "Baily's Magazine" for October, 1877, we find the following letter of his quoted :—

"My head-quarters at that time were at South Molton, and I hunted as many days in every week as my duties would permit with John Froude, the well-known vicar of Knowstone, with whom I was then on very intimate terms. His hounds were something out of the common—*bred from the old stag-hounds, light in their colour, and sharp as needles; plenty of tongue, but would drive like furies.* I have never seen a better or more killing pack in all my long life. He couldn't bear to see a hound put his nose to the ground and 'twiddle his tail.' 'Hang the brute!' he would say to the owner of the hounds, 'and get those that can wind their game when they are thrown off.'"

This does not sound much like a slow, pottering lot, and I am bound to confess that there is no man's word on which I would put more implicit faith on such a question than on that of the Rev. J. Russell, for I am convinced that no man knows more about hounds in their work (very few so much), and the Yorkshire people can bear testimony to his knowledge of them in the show-yard. Whether it is for the best interests of sport that we have lost the blood, I do not pretend to say. Many men hold

that for all chases the fox-hound is the best. With them I can scarcely agree. If you merely want to gallop, no doubt he will give you the greatest opportunity; but I think that hunting the wild deer must have had a greater charm with the old deep-toned hounds, and, moreover, from their fine voices, they must have been far easier to ride to over such a country, where, when the hounds go one way, the horsemen often have to go another to meet them again. I also think that they may have had an advantage on roads under the hot August sun, and in trying the water where a deer had taken soil. No doubt the great drawback to them was a want of means for infusing fresh blood, so that probably the hounds degenerated of late years from breeding in and in;[1] they also appear to have a little of the bloodhound's self-will, and evinced a strong liking for Porlock mutton, and, as Dr. Collyns says, the only remedy is the halter for that. Strong inroads must at times have been made on the pack, and there was no chance to replace them, after the breed was discarded from the Ascot kennels in 1815. Hence it is not surprising that they were replaced by the more easily procured fox-hound, even if he was scarcely so well calculated for the business (I have heard a very good sportsman and a master of hounds say that nothing but a fox-hound could stand the work of tufting, and help run down a wild deer afterwards); but, with all due deference, the stag-hounds must have done it before them. However, when we look at the enormous expense it would be to keep up a single pack, with no chance of an exchange of sires nearer than France (if my supposition is right), and even then doubts as to their purity, how many would be worthless from the in-breeding which must necessarily take place, the number of walks required, and other troubles attendant on sticking to an unusual breed, no one can wonder at their having been given up, however much we may lament it, and I myself could be almost content to put the dial back fifty years and take its con-

[1] Madness was said to be very prevalent in the Royal kennels at last.

sequences, were it possible, for a chance of seeing the grand old lemon-pies run down a warrantable deer. It is a strange thing that, not ten years before I was born, Mr. Shard was hunting with them in the very neighbourhood where I was bred, and entered to hounds with that fine sportsman, Mr. Robert Cockburn, and yet never a word have I heard spoken there concerning them. Every one knew that Mr. Shard kept stag-hounds, and most must have hunted with him; but, bless their observant hearts! that there was any difference between his pack and Mr. Villebois's fox-hounds, or Mr. Chute's "Multum in Parvos," never came within the scope of their philosophy. I wonder if they would have noticed it, had he painted every hound a bright blue or red before going out of a morning? But not a great deal is to be expected of the rustic intelligence which can mistake an Esquimaux dog for a wolf, and live in abject terror of what had been the pet of the crew of the *Pandora* for months, as was done there a few years ago, until a lucky shot stopped the sheep-killer, and revealed the mistake that those who had good opportunities of seeing him had fallen into. But, with many, a dog is a dog and a hound a hound, the difference between a hound and sheep-dog, say, for instance, lying principally in the fact that one has a rough coat and the other a smooth one.

Let me get back to the Devon and Somerset *since* the old hounds were sold, and very little is there to say about them until Mr. Bisset took the helm in 1855, when the ship was nearly wrecked, the deer all but gone, and things about as bad as they well could be. What wonders he has worked! how the deer, of which at first he had to be wondrous careful, have increased, until he can now work his will amongst them without fear of spoiling the next season! Need I say how popular the sport has become, and how many are drawn into the lovely west country by a chance of seeing "the ancient sport of kings," as Mr. Carter termed it, when depicting a grand scene of a stag at bay in his Academy picture of 1877? How wild the charm of

the sport is, none will deny who have ever joined in it, and very, very few, I think, are those who, having once tasted of its fascinations, will not long again and again to renew the draught. I know a gentleman who cannot be far from the three-score-and-ten limit, who, having as fine a country as all England can show within range of his own stable door, having once been there, still makes his yearly pilgrimage to the wilds of Exmoor as each autumn comes round. Mr. Bisset, who carries out the ancient *régime* of the chase in all its purity, tufting for his deer, and ever seeking to rouse and kill the "old stag," if possible (long may he continue to do so!), has decided that a *large* fox-hound is the animal most suited to his requirements, and here experience says that his judgment is sound. It may be urged that a lighter hound would be less liable to injury from rocks and hard ground, which these hounds are often called on to traverse, and this is true; but to set against it we have the advantage that a large hound has in such a country as the Devon and Somerset, when they come into strong old heather. Here the small hound would be drowned and lost, while the five-and-twenty inch one lashes over it almost with the ease of the deer himself. If any of my readers doubt this, let them get into a similar situation with a tall man and a short one, and they will soon understand and appreciate it. I remember hearing of a celebrated M.F.H., a very short man, who, in shooting, got into a large area of old, stiff heather, and it was almost a question whether he ever would get out again without extraneous help. Now I fancy I hear some fox-hunter say, "We hunt on moorlands, and there find our wildest and best foxes; but hounds from three to four and twenty inches answer our purpose—why cannot they do for deer?"

Because the fox is a short-legged animal himself, and even in a heathy country generally runs some track when in a hurry, and would go into old, strong heather as into gorse, only to skulk for a refuge—hence the difference; the stag has to cross it, and, if the hounds are to hunt him, they must follow. More-

over, there is the water to be taken into consideration; and where a big hound is only wading, the small one would often have to swim—a slight difference in a very strong current, or where a deer is set up in a pool. What Somerville says, "The pigmy brood in every furrow swims," is strongly exemplified in stag-hunting. Mr. Bisset does not, as a rule, breed his own hounds, and the reason is evident (forming also a strong case for not going back to the old blood), to get good-shaped hounds up to his standard, and they average twenty-five inches. I believe there is no bitch (?) even in the kennel under twenty-four, he would have to breed as many hounds as the Brocklesby or Belvoir, and then probably fall short of the number he wanted to put on every year; but by taking them from other kennels, he is able to obtain a lot of young hounds drafted merely for being above the standard, and very few will put forward a dog that goes beyond twenty-four inches in height; hence he often meets with grand giants exactly suited to his purpose. Hunting but two days a week, he does not want a large kennel, and thus can keep them up at a great deal less cost than it would take to breed them. Neither is it necessary to go so very far afield, for with Lord Portsmouth's, the Stevenstone, and, a few years ago, Lord Poltimore's packs—all celebrated, and all, as we may say, within hail—there has been plenty of material to draw from; and that of hounds bred especially for these wild countries, hounds that are expected to depend on themselves, and by their own nose and sense work out difficulties when no huntsman can get near to aid them. These qualities soon become hereditary, and hence the stag-hounds have a decided advantage in the surrounding packs, being of such a high standard.

"The last time I saw them, Arthur Heal was endeavouring to get them unrounded, and I certainly think it adds to the beauty of appearance in any hounds having their ears in their natural state; neither is it of any use, as the stag-hound has not the punishing work in drawing and hunting close gorses as

fox-hounds have. I can just remember 'little Jack Babbage' as huntsman to the Devon and Somerset; and a better servant, a cheerier little fellow, no man ever saw. He was a good huntsman, and, notwithstanding the work he had to do, and the length of chases he went through, he was never known to overmark his horse. Arthur Heal, who was his whip, and succeeded him when at a ripe old age he quitted the horn, is a very quick man indeed—one who can gallop with a will—and that not only on forest or heath, but along paths and sheep-tracks on the Combe sides, where, it appears, a goat would scarcely get safe foothold. He gets his hounds very quickly on the back of his deer when once forced away, and presses them along in a style that, with an old, heavy stag, brings it sometimes to a premature conclusion. In fact, he has gone in for the short, sharp, and decisive style. His whip is George Southwell, who has seen a good deal of hunting with the Vine and in Cambridgeshire, and was with fox-hounds a good man. I have never seen him with the deer, but, from all I know, I should say few better successors could have been found to poor George Fewings, who literally died in harness, a year or two ago, from a bad cold caught during the hind-hunting season in the neighbourhood of Porlock. Now I must take leave of wild stag-hunting, and I can only say, in conclusion, may its present revival last (I hope it will, as there are some good young ones coming on); may the herds all but extinct thirty years ago increase and multiply, and the sport become more popular year by year! Let, however, all who enjoy it remember that deer do a great deal of damage, which *must be paid for*, and that it is the place, I hope the pleasure, of all strangers who enjoy the sport to help find the means of doing it."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BLOODHOUND.

Two dogs of black St. Hubert's breed,
Unmatched for courage, breath, and speed.

No work treating of deer-hunting would be complete without some mention of the bloodhound, as, although he is now not in very general use, there is at least one pack of them—more or less pure—in existence for deer-hunting, and I have reason to believe that many are still in the hands of pack-keepers, and used by them in their occupation. However, the principal mission of bloodhounds in the present day is to disport themselves on the benches at dog-shows—and very interesting classes they make—while their calm and dignified deportment is a pleasing contrast to the noisy petulance displayed by most of the breeds exhibited. Taken merely as a companion, I think it very probable that dog-shows may have done something to improve the breed; but I am in doubt whether use, if we wished to put them to their legitimate business, would not be found to have been sacrificed for the sake of obtaining excessive show points. On this subject Lord Wolverton would be able to speak with authority, as I believe he has purchased them at shows occasionally, for the sake of crossing with his pack. At any rate the pure bloodhound is a noble dog, either for the chase or as a companion, and the wider the taste for keeping him is spread the better.

That the bloodhound is one of the oldest breeds extant I

presume no one would for a moment doubt; but in early days, or, in fact, nearly up to the present time, he appears to have been mixed up in almost inextricable confusion with other hounds of somewhat, but not exactly, similar character; and, in fact, any hound with a good deal of black and tan about him, a deep voice and long ears, was dubbed a bloodhound—a Talbot, a sleuthhound, a St. Hubert, or a Southern hound—according to the fancy of the person who was describing him, or the whim of his owner. And from him all our hounds are—very erroneously, in my opinion—supposed to have been obtained by crossing. That the Talbot, the St. Hubert, sleuthhound, and bloodhound, are one and the same breed, I have no doubt; but I think there is evidence to show that in England, at any rate, there was another breed of hounds hunting by scent, as early as the days of the ancient Britons, of somewhat similar character but still a distinct breed; and this, of which further on I hope to give some account, was what is called the Manchester hound in some parts, and in others the old Southern hound. My own opinion is that bloodhounds came into England with the Normans; that they were never very numerous, being kept more as lyme hounds than for hunting in packs, and for the purpose of running down outlaws and fugitives of all kinds, for which work they are peculiarly fitted.

In the "History of the French Breeds of Hounds of the Nineteenth Century," published in the *Field*, in 1872, by Count Le Conteux de Canteleu, M.H.—a work which, in my opinion, throws a great deal of light on the heretofore obscure subject of the origin of our hounds—the St. Hubert hound is described at some length; and by the plate given in the number for the 13th of January, any one at all conversant with dogs would at once recognize the St. Hubert as the same dog as the bloodhound. The author says, "The St. Hubert hound, and that of the Brasse country, appear to date from the earliest ages, and certainly existed in the time of the Gauls." Again: "The St. Hubert hounds, already celebrated in the eighth cen-

tury under the name of Flemish hounds, were divided into two subdivisions, according to their colour, viz., the black and the white. They seem to have descended from the famous Belgian hounds of which Silius Italicus speaks, and which he mentions as being excellent lymers for unharbouring wild boar. Thus a Belgian hound pursues the wild boars, and unwinds cleverly the track of the beasts, the nose low bent to the earth, following up the scent silently. They were, in fact, natives of the same country, and, like the Belgian hounds of the Latin poet, excellent lymers for tracking the boar. The most highly esteemed were the black-coated ones, and the abbots of St. Hubert's Abbey had kept up the breed in memory of their founder. They were generally of a slightly reddish black, with tan marks over the eyes and on the legs and feet, long pendulous ears, well-shaped but rather long loins, not so high on the leg as the Normandy hound, and possessing great hunting qualities, most particularly that of keeping true to the scent. They were deep-throated, fine-nosed dogs, showing great powers of endurance, but not great swiftness, and were very courageous and daring, prompt to show fight with any sort of game." In another place the same author says: "These animals were strong-bodied hounds, full of dash and spirit, but rather unruly. They were seldom ill, feared neither cold nor wet, were excellent for all kinds of 'black beasts,' as boars, badgers, &c. The huntsmen were obliged to treat them severely, for, besides being quarrelsome and apt to fight together, they showed savage dispositions towards man." I learn from the same source that after the sixteenth century they were thought much less of in France, and, in fact, used principally as lymers for the wolf and boar—those presented by the abbots of St. Hubert to the king every year being put to that use, and they were much prized by the harbourers up to 1789. Charles the Ninth complains that these hounds, when the game tries to put them off the scent, and give change, neither cast forward nor take up a new track, which is certainly a defect, but one at least which proves their

tendency to stand true, and not to be put off easily. "In fact," says the royal writer, "they can only suit people who labour under the gout, and not those whose object is to shorten the life of a stag."

The description Shakespeare gives of the hounds of Theseus, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," has been taken by many to apply to the bloodhound, but I think he refers more particularly to the Manchester or Southern hound, and have no doubt but that animal was more common, and more generally used in chase in his day than the bloodhound. Gervase Markham says, "The black hound, or he that is all liuer (liver) coloured or milk-white, which is the true Talbot, are best for the string or lyam, for they do most delight in blood, and have a natural inclination to hunt dry-foot, and of these the largest are ever the best and most comely." At the same time he recommends spotted hounds for composing a pack.

The white St. Hubert, or Talbot, appears to be entirely lost (in England at any rate) in the present day, but the bloodhound was used in the New Forest by the keepers, as I shall presently relate, and by them known under the name of Talbot, until the destruction of the deer. Richardson speaks of the Talbot thus: "The Talbot is perhaps the oldest of our slow hounds. He had a broad mouth, very long pendulous ears, was fine coated, and not as some write, rough on the belly; and his colour was generally a pure white. This was the hound formerly known as St. Hubert's breed, and was distinct from the bloodhound. It is remarkable for its deep, sonorous voice; and it is very likely the same as the old Southern hound"—an inference which, if the author of "French Hounds" is right, *must* be decidedly wrong, as it was really a white bloodhound.

Having now said something about the bloodhounds in ancient times, I may state that, in the early part of the present century, the celebrated Colonel Thornton used a couple of them to hunt outlying deer, and that, later on, Sir Clifford Constable had a pack with which he hunted turned-out deer, at any rate as early

as 1837. About 1841, Mr. Selby Lowndes, since celebrated as a master of fox-hounds, had several couple of them—in fact, a pack—with which he hunted the fallow deer in Whaddon Chase; and on my once asking him if he considered they had finer noses than modern fox-hounds, he told me he had found little difference in them. This carries out my own idea, which is that a bloodhound simply hunts a colder scent than a fox-hound *because he takes more pains*. He stoops for a scent when the other is driving ahead. It is like the quick school-boy and the plodding one; they are each very well in their place—that of the fox-hound being to chase his victim to death as quickly as possible, the bloodhound to hunt it down by patience and perseverance. A very capital article on the blood-hound, which I shall quote, gives, perhaps, a better idea of their peculiarities, and tends at the same time to show how little they have changed, more than any observations I could make on the subject. It was contributed by Mr. W. Meyrick to the *Sporting Magazine*, in 1841, and gives a description of a hound called Marmion, whose portrait, by Hancock, adorns the number:—

"Notwithstanding neglect, the bloodhound is still occasionally to be met with in something like its former purity; and, although their powers are seldom tried, well authenticated instances, even at this present day, show us that the faculties attributed to them by ancient chroniclers were no more than the truth fully warranted. Amongst many instances, the correctness of which I can vouch for, I may mention that it is not more than twelve months since a hound of this description was mainly instrumental in discovering two men from the neighbourhood of Buckingham, who were subsequently tried and transported for sheep-stealing; the hound having traced them from the spot where the sheep were slaughtered to the cottage in which, as well as in a pond adjoining, portions of the lost mutton were discovered. The principal breeds of bloodhounds which have come under my own observation are those of Mr. Lowndes, of

Whaddon Hall, the Duke of Grafton's, Lord Tankerville's, Lord Bagot's, and Sir Clifford Constable's; and I lately saw a most promising puppy, belonging to her Majesty, which I understood came from the New Forest—a spot where the breed might have been expected to remain, perhaps, longer than in any other, owing to the forest having so long preserved its integrity as a royal chase. But I have every reason to believe that the breed is nearly extinct even there, having myself made most diligent inquiries on the point, when in the forest a few months back. (In this Mr. Meyrick was mistaken.) Marmion, whose portrait illustrates the present number, is, perhaps, the purest and finest specimen of the breed now in existence, possessing, in an eminent degree, all the fine qualities which have so long distinguished this noble race; he is at present the property of Lord William Beresford. It will be seen that the great characteristics of the breed, so far as we can judge from the description given of them by old writers, are very truly preserved and fully developed. The head of the bloodhound is the chief point to look at for the indubitable marks of the animal's breed. The forehead should be broad and high, the skin exceedingly loose, the eyes deeply sunk into the head, having a grave, contemplative expression, and showing a deep crimson line of flesh under the eyeballs; the ears should be long, low set, and pendulous. The chaps should be very thin, with the flesh hanging long and loose. The limbs and body should be large and heavy, and, although the colour varies, the prevailing and favourite one is black and rather light tan, intermixed with grey along the sides and shoulders; but when of a light colour, as they often are, the extremities, such as the muzzle, ears, and centre of the back and tail, should be dark. A very great difference, however, exists between the dog and bitch. In no other kind of dog are the masculine and feminine character so distinctly marked as in the bloodhound; scarcely any of these points I have endeavoured to describe, as properly belonging to the dog, being

developed to any great extent in the bitch, however well-bred she may be.

"Marmion, the subject of the present memoir, has frequently distinguished himself in running deer, and I cannot do better, perhaps, than insert the following extract from a letter, written in true sportsmanlike spirit, by one who also saw him perform last summer for the first time:—

"'I started for Winslow on Sunday afternoon, taking with me Dorcas and Marmion; supped with Lowndes, and started for the Chase at four o'clock the next morning. We first tried a wood near Solden for an outlying deer, but, not being able to find him, we returned to the Chase, and immediately found a fine buck, and, after a run of an hour and a half, he was shot by the keeper. During this run, both Dorcas and Marmion behaved in a style that called forth the admiration of Mr. Lowdnes and his keepers, although unable afterwards to render any effectual assistance, as they were both thoroughly beaten and winded. We ran several others, but were unable to kill, the dogs being knocked up by the first two chases. You cannot, I am sure, fancy any sport so truly grand as hunting deer in the Chase, with eight couple of bloodhounds, all giving tongue, and making music enough to wake the dead; the only fault to be found is that, if you follow the hounds, the riding is most dangerous. Altogether, our day's sport made an impression on me such as I shall never forget. Buck-hunting ends on the 25th of September, but when the acorns fall, the does get fat, and they are hunted in like manner with the bucks.'

"I have frequently seen Marmion, in the course of last winter, in company with several other dogs belonging to me and to the gentleman whose letter I have just quoted, run a man, who had merely trodden upon a piece of flesh, or put a little blood on his shoes, after three or four hours' 'law'; often during a frost, and again across a cold and flooded country, almost without a check. A more kind or generous-tempered animal does not exist when kept loose in a kennel; but, when

chained up, his temper appears to be completely soured, and he is by no means safe; and, so far as my observation goes, I should say that, although they are generally good-tempered, this is a characteristic of the breed. With respect to the mode of training them, I have invariably found that a little practice is all they require, if judiciously managed. It is astonishing how soon, and with what eagerness, they will pursue the scent of anything in the shape of flesh. Care should be taken, however, not to prolong their lessons too much at the commencement; and the less frequented the scene of operation is at first the better, as they are inclined, when young, to be shy of strangers. After they have been induced to stoop readily to the scent of blood, and have gained sufficient confidence to run for a field or two by themselves, the length of the chase may be rapidly increased, and the slightest stain of blood at starting will enable them, if well bred, to carry it on through almost every difficulty. I have always adopted the plan of giving them now and then a small portion of flesh at the end of the run as a reward; for I am inclined to think, unless this were occasionally done, they would get 'slack' as the scent became cold. I may just observe that I have found them give very little tongue when running a man by the foot, only occasionally opening when cheered, or when they suddenly come off the ploughed land into a spot where the scent lies well and strong."

In Idstone's book of the dog, this account of their hunting is very much confirmed, although he treats them more from the dog-show point of view than any other. He says, "Tempers vary in dogs, however, as well as in Christians, and, after diligent inquiry, I am led to think that, as a rule, the blood-hound is amiable, sagacious, faithful, obedient, and docile; that he might be, in some cases, used as a retriever, or to track and find a child lost in the backwoods or bush of the Australian wilds. And I do not draw this conclusion at hazard, as I know that one owner of the pure breed has frequently hunted his

own children with them; I have his word for it, I am certain that it is true, and I need scarcely add that it involves no risk."

I will now turn to modern bloodhounds that have come within the range of my own observation. The first are those belonging to the late Mr. Thomas Nevill of Chilland, near Winchester, Hants, who had some considerably over thirty years ago. The first were procured from the New Forest—unless I am mistaken, from one of the keepers named Primmer, a dog and a bitch—and these were the foundation of the pack of which Mr. Nevill retained the blood to the time of his death, although by selection he has considerably altered them from what is now considered the true bloodhound type. I remember the first he had well, although I was then very young; the dog, called Rufus, was almost entirely black, with merely tan markings on the legs, and spots over the eyes, the same as is seen in black and tan terriers; the bitch was a rich deep tan, the same as we generally see in shows, running into black in the shape of a saddle-mark along the back and sides. They were both rather rough-tempered, and the bitch exceedingly shy and timid in the presence of strangers. Mr. Nevill has since bred to the colour of the dog Rufus, and to the last his pack were marked as he was, but of even a deeper, richer black. Of course this has been a work of great time, and for years most of them came of the ordinary bloodhound colour, while the blacker ones were frequently ticked with very small white spots—one I remember so much so as to be almost grey. His name was Norman—and a very good hound he proved—but Mr. Nevill never used him on account of his colour, and I think gave him away at last. Not many years ago I chanced to meet with a keeper whose family had held a walk in the forest for two or three hundred years, and I believe hold it still, when our conversation turned on the bloodhounds, and he told me that they kept a couple or more at each keeper's lodge, for the purpose of recovering wounded bucks, that the hounds had been in the keepers' hands from generation to generation, and that they called them "TALBOTS." His father, he told me, had a very

celebrated one, named Hawser, and, although the fallow deer in the forest at that time were counted by thousands, he had known him put on the slot of a slightly wounded buck, and he would stick to him over a large portion of it, alone, hunting through all the different herds, and never changing until he brought him to bay. They have lost him, and then late at night heard his voice when he had brought the buck back and "set him up," and gone out and shot him. Mr. Nevill has bred at times as many as eight and ten couple, and about the year 1850, when the royal buck-hounds ceased to go into the New Forest, Capt. Powell (since dead), Capt. Williams, and other gentlemen living there, got permission to hunt the red deer, assembled all the hounds left at the keepers' lodges, and formed them into a pack, when Mr. Nevill sent his down to join them. I remember hunting with them, and very good sport we had, but I was too young then to take much notice of their style and manner of hunting. Mr. Nevill constantly turned out deer before his, besides hunting hares with them, and in the summer even rats in the hedges. I was a great deal with them, both at that time and since, and the impression left on my mind was that they were very shy of strangers, very independent in their notions of hunting—that is, more inclined to take their own line, and make a separate cast for themselves, than be guided either by what the huntsman or their companions were doing—and that there was none of that dash and drive in them which is such a characteristic of the fox-hound. Moreover, they were inclined to be soft and give up, which no doubt was the result of many generations of breeding in and in. Some of them were intelligent, and very fine-tempered, and one I remember Mr. Nevill had confidence enough in to put on the line of a man who had stolen some turkeys one night, on which he opened and ran freely; but after a short pursuit, finding the thief had dropped his prize, no doubt from fright, the hound was stopped. They would run a drag very well, but the man or boy was always allowed time to get to a safe refuge in a tree before they could

come up with him. Of late years I have seen little of them. They were exceedingly difficult to rear, and peculiarly liable to distemper, which has at times nearly cleared the kennel, so that Mr. Nevill, just as he had got the pack up to his wishes, has suddenly found himself with all the work to do over again. This was especially the case when he exhibited them at the Agricultural Hall, from which his kennel was almost cleared, and he had only the cup he won to console him for his empty benches. During the Second Empire he sent some over as a present to Prince Napoleon at Meudon, and they were there much appreciated.

Another pack of bloodhounds that has come under my notice is Lord Wolverton's, with which he hunts turned-out deer at Ranston, in Dorsetshire; and, although some say that these have a fox-hound cross in them, they come quite up to the old-established type of bloodhound, and are like Mr. Nevill's when he first got them from the forest. I shall not pretend to determine whether they are pure bred or not; all I can say is that their appearance, as well as their style of hunting, would lead one to suppose that they are.

The following letter, written by their former master, and given me for publication through the kindness of a friend, appeared in the *Sporting Gazette* of May 2nd, 1874, and I think bears out the impression I have formed that they are pure bred, unless they have been crossed since in his lordship's possession.

"The hounds now in the possession of Lord Wolverton were bred by me—at least eight couple were. Some of them are hunting still. I saw them last summer at his place. I obtained the breed from the late Mr. Jennings, in Yorkshire, and Mr. Conan of Bladun Burn, near Newcastle. I then began my pack by keeping them as low as I could, but not less than twenty-six inches. Their weight at two years old should be about seventy to eighty pounds. They do not come to maturity until three years. They are very delicate until they are eight or ten months old, and require unskimmed milk and lots of room; in fact, they

should be at large for hours in the day *without* a man, for this reason: they have great intelligence, and are not mere machines like fox-hounds. They soon learn by themselves what to avoid, and will act accordingly. I hunted a drag always with mine—a small piece of raw meat, the fresher the better, about one pound weight. A man took it on foot, and I gave from two hours to four hours' start if for horsemen; two hours if for mere exercise, of which they require a great deal; four hours, sometimes six hours. The man should go about five miles and put the drag in a tree. Nothing is to be put in the meat on any account. They will not be driven or stand cracking a whip, get sulky or cross; they must be let alone, and the slower they go the more beautiful the hunting. In breeding, I found that the narrower the head—a high point in show-dogs—the worse hind quarter, no second thighs, and consequently they were unable to last for quick work. That and flat feet are the drawbacks. The sooner they are let hunt the better. At three months old I used to begin; they never seem to care so much for any scent as what they were first entered at. They require a large kennel, as when they fight there is much harm done, and they do not cool down for some time. One which had been petted by Lady W—— was put back into the kennels, and the others killed him at once; but they are in general quiet. I don't think they are always to be left to servants; they can pick up bad habits like other people: but to a master they are delightful, so affectionate and obedient. They must have a gallop of some kind thrice a week, or they get puffy, for you must not let them get low or shorten their food. They should be above themselves, or they get tired; plenty of flesh, often given, raw, and large lumps at a time. The chewing promotes digestion. In work they do not caste like other hounds; each hound goes alone, and never watches for another dog; in fact, they never take their nose off the ground, and only one deer was killed by them in Dorsetshire. Even when in the same field, they never get a view; so all the deer have been saved without difficulty. A

pack of ten couple is as many as should go out, as they all give lots of music. Fifteen couple should be kept, as so many accidents occur. They eat more than other hounds, and won't stand short commons, and have it made up in whip-cord.—John Roden."

Lord Wolverton, I have been told by those who have had ample opportunity of seeing these hounds, has shown capital sport with them in Dorsetshire, hunting red deer from the cart; and report says that they not only hunt well, but go a good pace. The only time I ever saw them was when they were hunting wild fallow bucks in the New Forest, in 1874; and I must say that, after what I had heard, I was somewhat disappointed with their performance; but I think that I saw them under great disadvantage, and for this reason. They had been used to hunt red deer, and were then asked to take fallow; at any rate, a portion of their own country is, unless I am much mistaken, better scenting ground, though the Forest is pretty high in that respect, and, moreover, they had to deal with a *wild* animal in his native place, instead of one turned out, to whom one line was very much the same as another. Moreover, their huntsman was labouring under similar difficulties. I know that the scent of the red and fallow deer is different when in a wild state, as an old stag-hunter told me that once, when hunting on the Quantock Hills, they ran their stag down into the gardens at St. Audrey's, where there chanced to be a stray buck; and the gardeners, not knowing the difference, tried to holloa the hounds on close at him; but, though heated with the chase, and running for blood, they took no more notice of him than they would have of a donkey. As Mr. Roden says, these hounds are so sensible, and always appear to care more for the scent to which they are first entered, I think here is one very good reason why they did not show their best form in the forest. Moreover, I take it that the scent of a wild animal would be dissimilar to one kept as deer are for hunting purposes. I have heard a great authority on dogs say that his

experience of bloodhounds was that they could trot nearly as fast as they could gallop; and when Goodall painted his celebrated picture of Lord Wolverton's pack, the pace they were represented as going was put forward as one reason for thinking they had a cross. In this opinion I cannot coincide, for the picture recalled to my mind their style of going in chase exactly, and, having hunted with them under disadvantageous circumstances, I can say that, so far from being able to trot as fast as they could gallop, I saw them at times get along at a very decent pace, though not equal to that of fox-hounds or fast harriers.[1] I have, moreover, been accustomed to bloodhounds ever since I can remember, but certainly never found them so exceedingly slow. Of show dogs I know nothing at all; it probably is true of them that they cannot move in the gallop. On the other hand, I do not consider them good hounds for a pack, because, as Mr. Roden says, each hunts for himself, and they do not look to and depend on each other. Moreover, to form an efficient

[1] Since the above was written, I have seen the following in Whyte-Melville's "Riding Recollections:"—"Full, sonorous, and musical, it is not extravagant to compare these deep-mouthed notes with the peal of an organ in a cathedral. Yet they run a tremendous pace. Stride, courage, and *condition* (the last essential requiring constant care) enable them to sustain such speed over the open as to make a good horse look foolish; while amongst enclosures they charge the fences in line like a squadron of heavy dragoons. Yet, for all this fire and mettle in chase, they are sad cowards under pressure from a crowd. A whip cracked hurriedly, a horse galloping in their track, even an injudicious rate, will make the best of them shy and sulky for half the day. Only by thorough knowledge of his favourites, and patient deference to their prejudices, has Lord Wolverton obtained their confidence, and it is wonderful how his perseverance is rewarded. While he hunts them they are perfectly handy, and turn like a pack of harriers; but if an outsider attempts to 'cap them on,' or otherwise interfere, they decline to acknowledge him from the first; and, should they be left to his guidance, are quite capable of going straight home at once, with every mark of contempt." Major Whyte-Melville states that they are *pure bred*, and that by judicious drafting their feet have been much improved. There can be no better authority concerning them, as he knows them well, and has hunted a great deal with this pack.

pack, hounds must at times be taken hold of by the huntsman, and turned by the whip. This, Mr. Roden says, bloodhounds do not like. I heard Lord Wolverton say the same in the forest, and my own experience bears it out. They are too independent, or clever, if the term is more agreeable to their admirers; and I fear I must add that this cleverness is at times so great as to border very closely on contrariness. I have heard one of the best huntsmen of the day say that nothing was so fatal to a pack of hounds as allowing them to become conceited. Those that will not notice what others are doing, or stand a rate, are, I fear, very far on the road to conceit.

My opinion of the bloodhound is that he is out of place in a pack; but that, used as the Hon. Grantley Berkeley used Druid, either to drive game to the rifle or retrieve it when wounded, they are invaluable. Here, using only one, or a couple as the case may be, their cleverness and independence has full scope; they can use their intellect without interference from a huntsman, take time to puzzle out the scent when at fault, and hunt after their own manner; but this is not what we want in a pack, and I doubt very strongly if bloodhounds were ever used to any great extent, save as auxiliaries to the bow, cross-bow, or rifle. Again, in hunting a man, if their nose only enables them to keep the line, pace is very little object; for, although a Weston or Gale may give them some trouble if he kept going straight ahead to overtake him, ordinary thieves or freebooters would, I anticipate, having secured their prey, make straight for what they considered some place of security, and hide there, so that if the hound will only bring his master to the spot with certainty, the pace and style in which he does the work is of very small importance indeed. Whether the bloodhound can really hunt a lower scent than ordinary hounds will, I fancy, always be a moot point; there is no doubt but he has an exceedingly fine nose, and nature has endowed him with the patience to make the most of it. That other dogs can hunt a low scent also may be inferred by watching one who has lost

his master, and noting how perseveringly he will track him step by step; but see the same dog—say a terrier—excited in the chase of a rabbit, and the chances are he is over the scent, and loses it in a very short time. Hence I infer that it is not so much superiority of nose as want of patience, and method in using it, that debars most dogs, more particularly hounds, from hunting as cold a scent as the bloodhound. Let him work and drive like the fox-hound, and he would no longer hunt a man or deer hours after he had been gone.

It is time, however, that I dismissed him, as he is more used for companionship than sport in the present day; but I may say that those who keep them may have a great deal of enjoyment by doing as Mr. Roden did, and treating themselves and their friends to a fine piece of hunting occasionally, when they have a suitable locality at hand, and enhance the pleasure to be derived from the possession of one of the grandest breeds of dogs at the present time in existence. No doubt many do so; but I fear that, on the other hand, a large proportion of the bloodhounds now alive are looked on merely as pets and show-dogs, and lead about as useless lives as they possibly could do.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BUCK-HUNTING.

Alate we ran the deer, and through the lawnds,
Stripp'd with our nags the lofty frolic bucks
That scudded fore the teasers like the wind;
Ne'er was the deer of Merry Fressingfield
So lustily pull'd down by jolly mates,
Nor shared the farmers such fat venison,
So frankly dealt this hundred years before.

POPULAR as was the chase of the "dun deer"—which I take to mean the fallow buck or doe, in contradiction to "Great Harte," or red deer in ancient times—no doubt many of my readers will be astonished to find a chapter devoted to it in the year of grace 1878. And I am sorry to say it is an almost obsolete sport; yet, as it is still to be seen by those who take the trouble to search for it, I could not well leave it out of such a work as the present; neither, for that matter, am I inclined to do so, as in its season I consider it truly enjoyable. Moreover, it forms a nice change for those who have no yachting or fishing to attract them when fox-hunting is over. In fact, I have often wondered that more attention has not been paid to the fallow deer as a beast of chase in the present day, as he may be kept in a wild state where the red deer could not. I know that a few years ago, in the Witham Woods, in the Lincolnshire portion of the Cottesmore country, there were so many running wild, which had escaped from parks and bred, as to be a serious nuisance to fox-hounds when hunting in that part of the country; and such good care did they take of themselves that,

although parties were made to shoot them, it was very seldom that anything more than a fawn or two could be brought to bag. I fancy, however, that for those who like "woodland hunting,"—and there are many who do—some very good sport might have been had by running them down with suitable hounds, by which I mean hounds that would stick to the line in thick covert without much assistance, and throw their tongues very freely to let you know what they were doing. Slow work, no doubt, to those who hunt only to ride, but certainly not slower than cub-hunting; and, moreover, it could be indulged when prudence, as well as common humanity, says that foxes must not be interfered with. "Damage to farmers' crops," I hear some one say. My answer is that, when in the open, though the deer and hounds may go a little into standing corn, there would be no occasion for the horsemen to do so, and a haunch of prime fat venison in good season would heal any sore that was occasioned in that way. Certainly Lincolnshire is not the country one would select for this kind of sport, but there are, or were, the deer, wild and ready to hand, setting the gunners at defiance. In a part of Yorkshire, hunted, I believe, by Lord Middleton, which is very wild, hilly, and covered with moorland, I have also been told that there are enough deer to interfere with fox-hounds, and this would be a still more favourable place for hunting them. The hound I should select for the sport is a cross of the large, blue-mottled, slow harrier, such as is found in the north-west counties, and the fox-hound—a hound I have seen hunt with dash enough for this kind of work, where he could not be over-ridden, and yet have plenty of music. I have in my mind's eye now the way in which one so bred, and hunted with a pack of nearly pure Southern hounds, for whom, of course, he was too fast, flung forward on the scent, and took the gates in his stride. What sort of sport a good fallow buck would be likely to show will be found further on, when I come to describe the fallow deer as now hunted. I may say at once that I have noticed several

districts where the sport could be well carried out, with no more damage in any way to the country than is now done by the red deer-hunting in Devonshire, because I believe the buck, in equal numbers, would be not so destructive as the stag.

In parenthesis, I may say that it is odd in these days, when every care seems turned to increased production of food for the nation, that no one has ever thought of stocking his woods with deer. It is well known that they browse more than they graze, and would thus draw a large amount of sustenance from ivy and other sources in our coverts, and convert into food for man what is now totally lost. That such a plan is feasible is proved by the fact that a manor at Sunninghill, near Ascot, was held a few years (and no doubt is still) on condition of the owner keeping a certain (small) number of wild bucks on it. There was a park in the place, but no deer in it, the herd living about in the coverts and hedgerows; and the man who was annually employed to shoot them told me that they did comparatively little harm to the corn; but from being few in number, and having good choice of food, grew exceedingly fine, so that, to use his own words, "the does were nearly as big as hinds." I may say he was an old forester, as his family had been before him for three hundred years, and knew all about deer and their habits.

To return to the subject of hunting, although anciently esteemed much as a beast of chase, the buck and doe did not rank as a beast of forest with the hart, hind, hare, boar, and wolf; the beast of chase being the buck, doe, fox, marten, and roe. The difference between a chase and forest was that the chase had no courts as a forest had, and offenders therein were punished by the common law, instead of by the forest law. Every forest is a chase, but every chase is not a forest.

In Queen Elizabeth's reign the buck appears to have taken precedence of the hart hounds, at any rate in the matter of expense, as the following will show:—

BUCK-HOUNDS.

	£	s.	d.
Master's fee, whereof to himself per diem, twelve pence, and the rest to sundry huntsmen serving his appointment	50	0	0
Sergeants, two, fee apiece	20	0	0
Yeoman Prickers, two, fee apiece	9	2	6
Hounds, and meat to the groom of the Buck-hounds' allowance	13	6	8
Total	£92	9	2

HART-HOUNDS.

	£	s.	d.
Master's Fee	13	6	8
Sergeants' Fee	11	8	1
Officers and others serving said master, wages and allowances	13	6	8
Total	£38	1	5

Here was a difference indeed, and I can only attribute it to the fact that the Queen perhaps found it more convenient to herself to hunt fallow deer within parks than wild ones in the open, and consequently valued bucks higher, as more easily kept in such enclosures than stags. Her harriers, we find, cost 96*l.* 7*s.* 8*d.*, and otter-hounds 13*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*, or a total per annum of 240*l.* 4*s.* 11*d.*, fox-hounds not being mentioned amongst the items paid for hunting.

The British Solomon increased his expenses to pretty well double those of his predecessor, and we find buck-hounds amongst them. In fact, in this reign Gervase Markham wrote of the chase of the buck as follows:—

"The chase much better than any of these is hunting of the bucke or stag, especially if they be not confined within a park or pale, but having liberty to chase their ways, which some

huntsmen call 'hunting at force.' When he is at liberty, he will break forth his chase into the winde, sometimes four, five, and six miles forthright; nay, I have myself followed a stag better than ten miles from the place of his running to the place of his death, besides all his windings, turnings, and cross-passages. The time of the year for these chases is from the middle of May to the middle of September." Again, "The horses which are aptest and best to be employed in this chase is the Barbary jennet, or light-made English gelding, being of middle stature." He also observes that, "as stag-hunting is in season between April and September, and is most violent and swift when the sun is hottest and the ground hard, it is not fit for training young horses;" and says, "There was a certain race of little horses in Scotland, called Galway nags (probably Galloway), which he had seen hunt the buck exceeding well, endured the chase with great courage, and the hard earth without lameness, better than horses of greater puissance and strength."

In these quotations it is worthy of remark that Gervase Markham speaks of "the bucke or stag," placing the smaller and less noble deer before the other, from which we may fairly infer that the most common chase of the two in his time was that of the buck rather than the stag; and no doubt it was, for many a nobleman and country gentleman must have had a chase where fallow deer were to be found, whereas the forests in which the red deer made their abode were in the hands of kings and princes. It is also well to note that, although he speaks of hunting both four, five, or six miles from the place where they were found, in mentioning ten miles as a long chase, he asserts it to have been after a stag. This difference would, even in the present day, give a very fair inference of the powers of the two animals. It shows also that they were hunted with packs of hounds rather than coursed with deer greyhounds, as they could not have stood before the latter, running by sight for that distance. Good Queen Bess, we know, was very partial to seeing deer pulled down in a park or paddock with greyhounds;

and this is the sport which must have been principally adopted in enclosed parks, as that of chasing a poor animal round and round a place from which it could not escape would have been very slow indeed, whereas a couple of deer greyhounds have ample scope to pull down a buck or lose him. Hunting in a park, as we understand the term, no doubt was practised as a matter of parade for ladies, or gouty old gentlemen, who, being unable to ride up to hounds in the open, cantered about their parks, as those in later days who cannot walk take to battue-shooting and driving birds.

The first park in England was Woodstock, made by Henry Beauclerk, and walled round for the space of no less than nine miles. Others quickly followed his example, and from that time to the present a deer park has been considered almost an indispensable appanage of a British nobleman, though within the present generation the utilitarian spirit which has arisen has in many replaced the deer with sheep and cattle. Few of the general public ever have an opportunity of seeing deer-coursing in a park, even when the sport is indulged in (which is but seldom, the bucks being generally shot); but I can remember, as quite a child, witnessing some very good sport of this kind when the Duke of Buckingham's herd was caught in Avington Park, near Winchester, and removed to Stowe.

As the country became more enclosed and cultivated, deer were proportionately scarce, and the gun of the poacher soon completed their destruction, except in chases where they were especially protected, and even there they had a very bad time of it. One of the holds of the wild fallow deer in the last century was Alice Holt Forest, near Selborne, in North Hants; and Waltham Chase, near the town of Bishop's Waltham, which was the property of the Bishop of Winchester. In both of these places, as well as Woolmer Forest, which adjoins Alice Holt, the Waltham Blacks, so called from their habit of blacking their faces, committed their depredations, and the deer in each have long been extinct. In Whaddon Chase the fallow deer

lingered much longer, as I have shown, and were hunted by the present Mr. Selby Lowndes. Also, within the memory of middle-aged men, fallow as well as red deer were to be found on Exmoor, and were there hunted with harriers; but I believe there are none at the present time, except in the deer park of Mr. Snow, a wealthy yeoman at Oare, on the borders of the forest. Save in these instances, there was no buck-hunting to my knowledge in England, except when harriers were laid on the scent of an outlying one, and with these capital sport was shown.

Strange changes, however, came about when the order went forth to destroy the deer in the New Forest. There were thousands of fallow deer in that wild part of Hampshire; when hunting red deer there, I have seen them cross the line of the hounds in hundreds. How ruthlessly and wastefully they were slaughtered is now matter of history, and how, when their numbers had become few and they were shy from persecution, the Hon. Grantley Berkeley and his old bloodhound Druid still worked amongst them, until only one was left that took to herding with the forest ponies, was all recorded by his pen in the *Field*. Even then the destruction was not so complete as was imagined. A few had taken refuge in neighbouring manors, where I think they had the hand of protection held over them, and in a very few years there was a sprinkling of fallow deer once more in the forest, though the nobler red stag was gone for ever. Few in numbers and shy from persecution, these were very different from their ancestors, who would run right across the track of the horsemen when in chase; and, when we consider the sporting instincts which have always characterized the inhabitants of the forest, there was nothing more natural than that leave should be asked from the Crown to hunt them. I think I am correct in saying that Mr. John St. John and Mr. James Dear, who took their harriers there for the month of April some fifteen or sixteen years ago, were the first to indulge in this sport, but on that point I am open to correction. I know it was in their time that I had first

hunted there since the destruction of the red deer. Colonel Montresor then took his hounds, and after that Captain Lovell, who knows the forest as well as any one, got a couple or two of fox-hounds, which were steady to deer, as a nucleus, and every spring (leave to hunt being obtained for the April month) supplemented them with drafts from friends' kennels until a sufficient pack was collected, and has continued the sport. Here alone, at the present time, can wild buck-hunting be seen in England. I know of no merrier place to spend the April month than the New Forest, as the fox-hounds hunt on into May, and the deer-hounds are out twice a week; so that the man who, when hunting is over elsewhere, takes his horses to Southampton or Lyndhurst can very well manage to make out his season until the merry month sets in. Here are to be found, at this time of the year, some of our best sportsmen, and it is no unusual thing to see two or three masters of fox-hounds at a meet at Stony Cross. One year Lord Wolverton took up his pack of bloodhounds and hunted on alternate days with Captain Lovell, but they did not seem to enjoy the scent, as I have previously said.

The sport in the forest is certainly not so good now as it was a few years ago, on account of the enormous amount of enclosure and planting which has taken place, transforming the only bit of wild scenery we had in the south of England into one huge pine forest; but I hope, now an end is put to this Vandalism, that the forest will be allowed to return once more to its natural state. As it is, where a few years back we rode across large open moors, there are acres of fir-trees through which it is impossible to follow hounds, and there is nothing for it but to stick to the ridings, and keep as near to them as you can by ear. The plan pursued in hunting the buck is very much the same as that of the stag. If possible, one is "harboured," and then, if amongst other deer, he is roused with tufters (or I have seen a bloodhound used for the purpose) and separated. If this cannot be effected, some of the more

eager of the field generally attempt to single him out, and divide him from the does with their horses, which feat often takes a considerable amount of hard riding before it is accomplished. Here there is a difference between this chase and that of the red deer, because in the season, when the stag is hunted, the old hart is generally alone, or accompanied only by young male deer, and he often lays so close that they are found and go away first; so that, if he is known to be in the covert, it is only to stop the hounds, and draw again until he is roused; whereas the buck evinces a disposition to run with the does. How this would be if he was hunted at the same season, viz. autumn, I cannot say, never having seen it; but so it is in the spring. By the way, why the New Forest bucks are always hunted in April, instead of after Midsummer, when the venison is in the best season, I have never heard. With the bucks as with stags, the young ones run best, and nothing will give such a chase as a "pricket" or two-year-old deer; so he is often selected, though, according to the rules of venerie, it certainly is not orthodox to hunt him. I have, however, known "a buck of the first head," or "great buck," show extraordinary fine sport. When once the buck is singled out, and hounds laid on, there is not much difference between his chase and that of the stag, except that the buck does not run so boldly, and is more inclined to circle after the manner of the hare. Even if he goes away, his points are not so stretching as the stag's, though I have seen one chased across a good part of the forest, and at last driven out of it; in fact, they have been killed some few miles beyond its real boundaries. This is not often the case, but very good runs occur within it; and even where they ring a little, the scenery is so much alike that, on the principle of all runs being straight to a stranger, very few know it. Towards the close, when a buck is tired, I think he has even more shifts to elude his pursuers than the stag, and that is saying a great deal for him; in fact, then it requires the greatest patience on

the part of the huntsman, and perseverance on that of the hounds, for he will not only take soil as the stag does, but hide himself so cunningly, and lay so close, that you may pass close by him again and again. Captain Lovell, when he can account for his deer, is always more anxious to save his life than kill him; but I doubt, myself, if a buck really, once hardly pressed, recovers enough to be any more use—at any rate for a very long time. I know it is so with red deer, and, I believe, Cooper, who was so long head keeper, shared this opinion with regard to bucks.

A friend of mine, at the end of a long chase, once saw the hunted buck standing under a tree; a couple of hounds ran up to him, but never bit him; he went on, made a bound into the ride, and fell over dead, without a mark on him. This makes me think that, when a deer is once run up, the knife should do its work. From an hour to an hour and a half, or an hour and forty minutes, is not an uncommon time for deer, as they are now in the forest, to stand before hounds; and a man must be fastidious indeed who is not satisfied with that time, passed amidst these beautiful glades, with all the freshness of an April day around him. In fact, the beauty of the forest must be seen to be appreciated at such a time, for vegetation is early there, and every tree is then putting forth its loveliest and freshest green. These meets are also, like that of the Devon and Somerset at Cloutsham Ball, often made an excuse for a kind of picnic by the neighbourhood, where the locality is suitable, and all kinds of vehicles, from the four-in-hand to the humble village cart, are brought into requisition to convey people there, who, if the run is a good one, will probably see little after the buck is roused, and the hounds laid on, or they may, under other circumstances, play the proverbial part of lookers-on, and see most of the game. Buck-hunting in the New Forest has revived one of our most ancient sports, and one which, I hope, will not easily be let drop again. Public opinion every day becomes more awakened to the importance of recreation and amusement. It has already so far asserted itself that there is little chance of

a lot of hungry surveyors, anxious for a job, cutting our last bit of natural scenery up into farms and eligible building-sites; and I sincerely hope that the gentlemen living round it, who are to a man fond of sport, will have influence enough to preserve also the few deer still left there, or even increase their number that the annual April's sport may not be cut short. It would be a great boon to many, who want of time or money keep from going into Devonshire, if bucks were hunted here in the regular season for the sport, from Midsummer to October.

As the buck ruts three weeks later than the stag, by so much could the season for hunting him be extended; and the does, until they were very numerous indeed, would be better left out altogether, as they generally run badly. The great bugbear to many hunting in the New Forest is the bogs, and I am fain to admit that several of them are dangerous enough; but with a moderate share of prudence, and selecting one who knows the ground as your leader (it is impossible for a stranger to ride his own line there), you may escape them well enough. I only know that, with a long experience in the forest, I was never in one, or likely to be in, though I have seen others less fortunate. In the summer and autumn, of course it would ride much firmer and sounder, generally, than in winter or spring.

No doubt many will be surprised to learn that there still exists, within a very short distance of London, a small herd of really wild fallow deer. These are all that remain in the once-famed Epping Forest, where old Bob Rounding, not very long ago, said to me, "I have sat here and seen them feeding within a hundred yards of my door." This was at Woodford Wells. There is very small chance of deer ever feeding there again. However, a few still remain in more inaccessible parts of the forest, and in the autumn of 1877 the keepers killed a very fine buck there; but it shows how wary they are become when I say that he was only killed after several attempts, and then not by what we should term legitimate hunting, as, although they had hounds, they waited about and shot him as he passed.

I have said in a former chapter that roebuck hunting had dropped out of our list of English sports of late years. Since that was written I am very glad to say that I have heard of its revival, and I sincerely trust it may again take root and flourish. The following account appeared in the *Sporting Gazette* of March 30th, 1878; some one signing himself "Harkaway" writes as follows:—"Friday, 15th, brings us to Friamayne, the seat of Mr. H. Cockeram, where the grandson of our worthy old squire, Mr. E. Farquharson, turned up with sixteen couple of rare short-legged harriers, with Mr. Fortt to put them to him, to do battle with the wild roebuck. After doing justice to the hunting breakfast so hospitably given by Mr. Cockeram, with Mrs. and Miss Cockeram's kind invitation to all comers—amongst whom I noticed all the *élite* of Weymouth, Dorchester, and its neighbourhood—we trotted off to Warmwell Washpond, which did not hold the wily animal. We went on to Knighton Wood, which belongs to our worthy county M.P. We found first a doe, which these little, sharp, stout-hearted hounds hustled up pretty sharp, when luckily we changed on to the buck, which had a splendid pair of antlers. He gave us a good big ring, all heath, and eventually got to his old quarters again. However, Mr. Farquharson, who is quite at home with his little plucky pack, was hot at him, and forced him out through Mr. Baunton's withy-bed, across Mr. Cockeram's coverts, straight across the meadows and heath to Warmwell, where he well-nigh beat our young master. Nothing daunted, he persevered, and found he had laid down in the laurels, from which he roused him, and had another good gallop, in which I was sorry to see Miss Cockeram came to grief, but in a moment she was in the pigskin again, and careering after her brother. The latter did all he could to secure a kill, but the constant changes in fresh deer baffled everything, so Mr. Farquharson discreetly stopped his hounds."

I must say I was delighted to see this account, as our choice of animals for the chase in England is so limited that it is a

pity one capable of showing sport should be lost to us; and as the roebuck is in season from Easter to Christmas, and we learn from the description of the above chase that he runs a good deal over heath, there is no reason why he should not give us an extension of the hunting season at each end by a week or two, though, of course, with the country so cultivated as it is now, the chase could only be indulged in before corn was high enough to receive injury, and again after harvest. As Mr. Farquharson appears to have had such a good day, we may yet see the sport revived; and if he has any of the spirit of his grandfather in him, which I should augur from "Harkaway's" description, if he takes it up, it will be more than ordinary trouble and disappointment which will make him relinquish the pursuit.

NOTE.—Since this book has been going through the press I have become aware that Mr. Thomas Lyon Thurlow, of Baynard's Park, between Guildford and Horsham, Sussex, hunts bucks with a pack of old English hounds in rather a peculiar manner. The method is this. In the autumn a certain number of bucks are driven from the park into the adjoining coverts and there allowed to run wild. These Mr. Thurlow finds with his hounds, runs down, and kills. He considers the black Norwegian bucks the stoutest, and told me that they would show more sport than a stag, and were far more difficult to hunt, a point he has ample opportunity of ascertaining, as he keeps red deer also. One last season took them to Petworth and back again, showing a four hours' run, and then killed a hound with a blow of his hoof. The hounds are now of large size, black-and-tan in colour, and very like bloodhounds in their general appearance, but of lighter frame and less throat. They came originally from Scotland, where they were used to hunt deer, and their ancestors, of which Mr. Thurlow showed a picture, were pied, but quite different from fox-hounds in appearance. They will hunt a very low scent, and one bitch was pointed out to me who would carry the line along the bottom of a brook as well as on dry land. Last season many of the pack were disabled through following their deer over the Ewherst stone-quarries when running hard—about eighty feet deep. Strange to say, none were killed outright, and the deer, although stunned, recovered himself, and was taken at Clandon Park, where his life was spared, and he is alive there at this time.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CHASE OF THE CARTED DEER.

Hunters are fretting, and hacks in a lather,
Sportsmen arriving from left and from right;
Bridle-roads bringing them—see how they gather,
Dotting the meadows with scarlet and white.
Foot-people staring, and horsemen preparing,
Now there's a murmur, a stir, and a shout;
Fresh from his carriage, as bridegroom in marriage,
The lord of the valley leaps gallantly out.

I NOW come to consider a perfectly different kind of stag or deer-hunting from either or any of those of which I have before treated—that is the turned-out deer. It is stag-hunting, it is true, but there could scarcely be conceived chases of a more different character than that of the wild and the carted deer. Personally I cannot say that I am an admirer of the latter diversion, nor can I see why hunting a bag-fox is cried down and reprobated as unsportsmanlike, while men consider they are quite orthodox in their sporting creed, who are content to turn out and catch again a carted deer—the only difference being that the fox is generally killed, while the deer, being so much more valuable and difficult to procure, is saved. (Lord Lonsdale and Mr. George Templer, of Stover, always saved their bag-foxes if possible, and both constantly hunted them.) Nevertheless, there are so many who are of a different opinion, and who are so passionately devoted to the sport, that I cannot entirely pass it over. Many plead—very justifiably, I admit—that here they can depend on having a certain gallop at a

certain time, which they cannot do in any other kind of hunting, except with the drag—that their find is sure, and a run nearly so—that time to them is valuable, and, when they give up a day to the chase, they want to be sure of a certain amount of exercise, and not to be sent home without a gallop, after perhaps riding about the country for hours in the vain expectation of a find. This is all very well for those who hunt merely for exercise (yet there are very few in the present day who cannot devote the necessary portion of time to secure that, even with fox-hounds or harriers); but, as I have said, one great ingredient towards the pleasure of sport is its uncertainty. Therein the pleasure of real wild sport lies—a pleasure that, however, we are fast eliminating from all that we call sport in England. The great charm of hunting the carted deer, for a great many, lies in the fact that here less damage results from over-riding hounds than in any other kind of chase, that the line is chiefly in the open, that the scent is, as a rule, so good as to enable hounds to keep out of the way, and, in consequence, they can indulge in the pleasure of cutting down their friends, without let or hindrance. Stag-hunting from the cart is, to the real houndsman, the least interesting chase he can pursue, from the fact that it calls for little tact and knowledge on the part of the huntsman beyond that of keeping his hounds in good condition, and riding well up to them, neither does it try the nose and excellence of hounds like another chase, from the extraordinary high scent left by deer kept in confinement, and highly fed. On the other hand, on their speed and wind it makes large calls, for if they cannot go the pace, and keep out of the way of the crowd, they are likely to have little chance of ever hunting again. The stamina of the hound, I conceive, is also less tried here than in fox-hunting, for, though the runs are often very long, and they have a considerable distance home, there is seldom more than one run in a day, and they are spared all the fatigue of drawing, as well as going from covert to covert, across heavy fields and in muddy lanes. Neither

during the course of a chase has the stag-hound the thick coverts, gorses, and brambles to encounter, which fall to the lot of the fox-hound.

One great drawback to this sport is the ease with which such a large animal as the stag is seen, especially in an open country, so that, should a check occur, people who have perhaps been wide of the hounds, who may be puzzling out a scent in some hollow, view him, and ride forward on the line. This may be urged also against the wild deer; but, it must be remembered, he is found in his home, and knows every inch of the surrounding country, and the skill with which he avails himself of all inequalities of the ground, so as to escape observation, is notorious, so that on an apparently open heath a wild stag is very soon lost to view. Not so the turned-out one; he is oftener than not released in a spot he has never seen before, the country is strange to him, and his whole course is determined either by the wind, subject to unforeseen interruptions, or his keen sense of smell, which leads him to seek the nearest water. In fact, he is too often an animal without a purpose, with no point to make for, no home to reach, wandering over the country in an aimless manner, and, when tired, if water is not at hand, seeking shelter in an out-house or cart-shed. Another drawback to the sport is the habit deer have of herding with cattle and sheep when hunted; and so persistent are they at times that all the endeavours of huntsman and hounds cannot induce them to part with their company; I need not say that this is the cause of a great annoyance and ill-feeling with farmers where cows or ewes are heavy. Then the habit of running roads and railways is a great drawback, and few chases are now concluded without their giving their followers a taste of either one or the other. To set against these drawbacks are the pace hounds are enabled to go, a certain amount of independence as regards scent, and the certainty of a find, though the run does not always follow, for old, cunning deer will often take to farm buildings at once,

and persist in running round them for hours—in which case I scarcely know a more ludicrous sight than a field of well-mounted sportsmen, in all the glory and paraphernalia of the chase, sitting to watch the antics of a stag that won't run, as he leaps in and out of orchards and pigsties. When they do go, the runs are often of great length, and a trial of stamina to horses, and nerve to their riders, if the country is at all stiff, as, from the deer's generally running in nearly direct lines from point to point, though he may make several angles during the course of the chase, there is very little chance of a nick, and men for the most part must ride straight to hounds if they wish to see anything of it. When we hear of very severe chases, however, which have extended over a long time, and find people pluming themselves on their own desperate riding, and the goodness of their horses in reaching the end of them, it is as well to ask how many times during the run the hounds were *stopped*. With a good pack most ordinary deer will be run into in an hour or under, unless scent be very bad indeed ; but, by continually stopping the pack, I have seen a deer, which could have been fairly run into in ten or a dozen miles, driven the length of thirty, and the chase related as a marvellous feat of speed and endurance, whereas it was very certain the deer for the greater part of it was only running on sufferance, and both horses and hounds did the journey by easy stages, if I may use the term. It will be said that natural checks in this kind of hunting seldom occur, and that these pauses merely take the place of them ; but, in any other chase, when speaking or writing of a superior run, how often do we say hounds race so long *without a check*, intimating that therein lies the beauty and pleasure of the performance. It is scarcely consistent, then, to make artificially, in hunting the carted deer, what we by no means like or approve of in any other chase.

Some deer, having once run to, and been taken at a certain place, will always fly to it again, turn them out where you will ; and when they do this, it gives the chase something

more of the character of wild deer hunting, as the animal hunted has a point or home for which he is determined to make, and will use all his art and cunning to get there. But, after all, it is a poor imitation, as, in the first place, you know when you turn him out where you will in all probability go, and can regulate the length of your run by the distance from it at which he is enlarged, and the amount of law allowed. Some masters do not allow the hounds to be stopped, but run down their deer as quickly as they can. Where this is the case, it adds much to the dash and beauty of the sport. I have seen it stated, in a book on "Rural Sports" of some standing, that when once the hounds are laid on, the chase of the carted deer is conducted on exactly the same principles as that of the wild one. To this I altogether demur, and some little experience in both branches of sport enables me to say that they widely differ from each other in every essential point. In fact, the turned-out deer, save and except "taking soil," has few, if any, of the shifts to which the wild one resorts, and the huntsman can scarcely be wrong, when free from water, in making a forward cast. As my readers already know, this is by no means the case in wild hunting, where the old stag has frequently found another to supply his place, he all the time being, as he thinks, safe and snug in the rear of those who are seeking his destruction. Again, compare the sight of a warrantable deer, with all his rights, clearing the covert's bounds into the open, and, having altered his slinging trot into a stately gallop, head and antlers well laid back, and looking the monarch of the waste, as he is, with the semi-tame deer, bereft of all his honours, bundled from a cart, and, as I have seen before now, ridden at, and whipped along like a donkey for the first quarter of a mile, by some too zealous sportsman, who is "afraid he won't run." Shades of Nimrod protect me from such a sight again! Then the take, which at its best, taking place in some brook or burn, is but a parody on the scene of a wild deer brought to bay; but what shall we

say of it when the scene is laid in an out-house or barn, or perhaps a dirty, muddy horse-pond, from which—the noble quarry being hauled by ropes—you see him pushed along by the united strength of a dozen or more people, until safely housed in a cow-byre, to be taken home, and again turned out for a similar exhibition at some future date?

What a glorious *finale* to a brilliant spin across country is such a scene! I have heard much made of the efforts of those out to *save the deer* by people who take a humanitarian view of the subject, but must ask leave to doubt whether they are not rather misplaced than otherwise; for be it known that deer, taken quite unhurt, have ere now died of fright alone, and an ex-master of stag-hounds once told me that he kept his deer in large paddocks, and let the terriers chase and bay them occasionally, as he found he lost fewer deer through fright on their first being turned out when thus treated. I have said nothing of the various accidents which happen to them at such times, but which surely ought to count for something in the eyes of those who follow the sport—such, for instance, as broken legs and backs, impaling themselves on spiked iron fencing, as I have known happen, getting entangled and almost cut to pieces in wire, and various other misfortunes which beset the deer turned out to be hunted, but which every one is so anxious to save. Could all stag-hunters arrive at the same mastery over animals acquired by the late Mr. Thomas Nevill, of Chilland, near Winchester, little exception could be taken to the sport on this score, for he has had deer which appeared to enter into the fun of the affair as keenly as he or his hounds. If memory serves me rightly, he commenced with a fallow doe, bred up quite tame from a fawn; she was so fearless that I have seen her enter the kennel with him, and eat from the trough where his bloodhounds were to be fed, with all of them looking on. When he wanted a gallop, she trotted loose in *the midst of the pack*, by the side of his horse, to any distance he liked. Then the hounds, being taken out of view, a slight touch of a whip was enough to

start her in a bee line for home; a few minutes' law being allowed, the pack were laid on, and a rattling burst was the result. The doe always cleared some high gates, and found the door of her pen open beyond; this a man shut, so as to ensure her safety, as it were, twice over. At the end of the chase, the hounds, having run her to the gates, were let in, and bayed around the door of the pen, like fox-hounds at an earth. Nay, Mr. Nevill could open the door and let them bay at her face to face, if he was there to keep order. Both parties were, after a time, perfectly satisfied—they that their game was caught, she that her safety was insured—and were ready to go through the same performance again the next day, if needful.

A still more curious circumstance was his taming an old red stag, called Monarch, who would walk about with him, and once being turned out and hunted after a short run, took refuge in some farm buildings, where he was not easily taken; but, on Mr. Nevill's riding up, ordering the hounds away, and asking the field to stand back, the old fellow, on being called by name, came to his knee, and, to the admiration of every one, trotted home by the side of his horse. Mr Nevill had a portrait of him taken in this position. This feat was performed more than once.

A still more remarkable instance of his power over deer was shown in the case of his hind, Princess, which I shall give in his own words, as written to his friend Æsop, and published in his "Sporting Reminiscences of Hampshire." After speaking of various chases with Monarch, he says,—

"His fellow-mate, Princess, has also many times done the same thing. She was left (in 1857) in the meadows with a cow, when she thought proper to roam away, and was absent for six months, and then I heard she was in Burntwood. I immediately let out two couple and a half of my stag-hounds, and with my father (who was a great sportsman), my huntsman and whip, after drawing for some time, roused her; she gave us first a ring round the wood, then broke away to Shrowner,

from there to the Grange Park, to Candover, through Wield and College Wood, Chawton Park, and Newton Common, and she was then a quarter of an hour before the small pack. She was seen by a man to go into Tring Down when it was quite dusk. My hounds and horses were quite tired, so I whipped off, and left her for another day. The distance was supposed to be thirty miles by the way she ran." I may note, before continuing Mr. Nevill's narrative, that there is no mention of stopping hounds here, and the deer, in an almost natural state, beat them.

He continues, "Three weeks after, I heard of her again from that noted sportsman, Mr. Edward Knight, of Chawton, and, taking the same number of hounds, I found her in Bushy Lees, and ran her at a racing pace for one hour. That good sportsman, Mr. William Collyer (who was especially fond of stag-hunting), was out on that day, and well he went for an aged man, as he was up at the take. The deer was running among some cows, and the huntsman holloaed to a man to open the yard gate; in another instant she would have left the cows, and we should not have taken her that day. I instantly got off my horse, and went into the yard; the moment I called to her, she instantly came to me, and I had some difficulty in keeping her from treading on my feet. Although she had been absent in a wild state for six months, she followed me into a pen, and would have followed me home, but I thought it too far."

I had the luck to be out in this second run, which took place in April, and over a very stiff line of country, so that the few who were there, with no crowd to make gaps for them, and the fences all newly done up, had their work cut out to live with the hounds. I shall never forget the scene when Mr. Nevill walked into the yard and called the hind; it was most unique, even to myself, who had often witnessed his singular performances with the fallow doe and other deer. Poor Princess had a narrow escape, as, when taken, a bullet-mark of several inches was found along her back, which had just grazed the skin. This, it

must be owned, is very different from ordinary stag-hunting from the cart, and, could it be always carried out, would, perhaps, be the perfection of sport, as not only the hunters, but the hunted, may enjoy themselves therein; but deer that have arrived at this pitch of tameness seldom run well, except it is to go home, and we may, I think, put Princess down, even after her six months' liberty, as the exception which proves the rule; in fact, I have heard Mr. Nevill say that he was forced to keep away from the deer he intended to hunt, or they became so tame that they would not run. This anecdote will, I have no doubt, recall to many of my readers the beautiful legend so exquisitely rendered into verse by Wordsworth, of the White Doe of Ryalstone, who recognizes her former mistress after years of absence, and tends to prove that the old legend very probably had some foundation in fact. Mr. Nevill, at any rate, has proved that domesticated deer are capable of strong affection and have tenacious memories.

It may be urged that I have so far said little in commendation of hunting carted deer, save its being an easily accessible sport for those who have little time to spare, and are anxious to make as certain of a gallop, when out, as they possibly can. When, however, conducted on a grand scale, there is an amount of pomp and ceremony about it which, could we but divest ourselves of the absurdity of enlarging a creature merely for the sake of catching him again, well befits the state of a royal recreation, where everything may be reduced to a certain amount of order beforehand, and a haughty monarch not find himself reduced to the mortification of having to ride in the rear of a miscellaneous ruck, because, being on the wrong side of the covert, he chanced to get a bad start; in fact, if such sport is in place anywhere, it is when employed as a means of recreation for a monarch, who would, perchance, be somewhat out of place in the crush of a start from Ashby Pastures, or amid the rocks and sloughs of Exmoor. In order that my readers may form some idea of it at its best, I quote the de-

scription of the sport as pursued by the royal pack in the early part of the present century, and I fancy they will say that it is by the pen of an enthusiastic admirer, and loses nothing from his manner of telling:—

"Rapturously transporting as is the moment of meeting, and throwing off with fox-hounds, no less so is the awfully impressive prelude to turning out the deer. The scene is affectingly grand, far beyond the descriptive power of the pen, and can only be seen to be perfectly understood. Unless an outlying deer is drawn for and found in the neighbouring woods, as is sometimes the case, a stag, hind, or havier, is carted from the paddocks of his Majesty at Swinley Lodge (where they are previously and properly fed for the chase), and brought at a certain hour (ten o'clock in the morning) to the place appointed, of which the surrounding neighbourhood have been sufficiently informed. At the distance of a quarter or half a mile from the covered convenience containing the deer are the hounds, surrounded by the huntsman and his assistants, called yeomen prickers, in scarlet and gold; a part of these having French horns, and upon which they must be good performers.

"In a very short time after the expiration of the hour agreed on, his Majesty is seen to approach, attended by the Master of the Horse and Equeries in waiting; it being the official duty of the master of the stag-hounds to be with them, and ready to receive his Majesty when he arrives. So soon as his Majesty resigns his hack, and is remounted for the chase, the huntsman receives an injunctive signal from the master of the hounds to liberate the deer. The moment which is obeyed, the usual law, amounting to ten minutes (more or less), is allowed for his going away; during this interval, the sonorous strains of the horns, the musical melodious echo of the hounds, the mutual gratulations of so distinguished an assemblage, and the condescending kindness and affability of the sovereign to the loyal subjects who love and surround him, is a repast too rich, a

treat too luxurious, for the side of a fox-hunting covert to be brought into the least successful similitude.

"The anxious crisis thus arrived, and every bosom glowing with emulative inspiration, a single aspiration of acquiescence, and a removal of the horse who heads the leading hound, give a loose to the body of the pack; and superlatively happy he who can lay the nearest to them. Upon the deer's going off from the cart, two of the yeomen prickers start likewise, in such parallel directions to the right and left as not to lose sight of the line he takes, so long as they can keep him in view, by which means they get five or six miles forward to assist in stopping the hounds at any particular point where they happen to run up to them; and if it was not for this prudent, necessary precaution, half or two-thirds of the horsemen would never see the hounds again in the course of the day.

"The joyous burst and determined velocity of every hound, followed by upwards of a hundred horsemen, all in action at a single view; the sport embellished, or rather variegated, with carriages containing ladies, who come to enjoy the ceremony of turning out; and the emulative exertions of horses, hounds, and men, afford a blaze of sporting brilliancy beyond the power of the utmost mental fertility to describe. At this moment of rapturous exultation only it is that the kind of horse indispensably necessary for this particular chase can be ascertained, for out of a hundred and twenty, thirty, forty, or a hundred and fifty horsemen, seven or eight only shall lay anywhere near or within a hundred yards of the hounds, for the longer the burst, the more the slow-going horses tail; so that when the hounds are stopped upon the heath, or in an open country, by the few who are up, lines of horsemen are seen far behind, more than a mile in length, getting forward in a variety of directions, bearing no inapplicable affinity to various teams of wild ducks crossing from one country to another. These horses, to whom it is all labour, are so distressed, even with the first burst, that if the hounds break away, and the deer crosses the country, they are

seldom to be seen at the end of a second. This is a most palpable and incontrovertible demonstration that any horse may *follow*, but none except thoroughbred horses can go *with* hounds. During the time the chase is suspended, and the hounds are at bay (which is till the king gets up), the exhilirating sound of the horses before them, and the clamorous impatience of the hounds to proceed, constitute a scene so truly rich and ecstatic, that the tears of excessive joy and grateful sensibility may be frequently observed in almost every eye. After this relief of a few minutes to both hounds and horses, in which they collect their wind, and become proportionally refreshed, the hounds are permitted to break away, which they do with redoubled ardour, as if it had absolutely increased by their recent restraint. The same scene of racing and tailing continues, during every burst, to the termination of the chase, the longer which is, the more the field of horsemen becomes reduced, while the blood horses only move in perfect unison, and at their common rating stroke, lay with ease by the side of the hounds; and this is the reason why, in long runs, so many are completely thrown out, and left to explore their way in different parts of the country through which the chase has passed. One material difference is known to exist between this kind of sport and every other. The utmost fortitude and indefatigable exertions are here made to save. In all the rest, the summit of happiness, the sole gratification of local ambition, is to kill; so that, at any rate, stag-hunting has the plea of humanity in its favour, in proof of which, the hounds are never known to run from chase to view, but every individual is feelingly alive to the danger of the deer, who has so largely and laboriously contributed to the completion of the general happiness of the day. A secret inspiration operates on every latent spring of human sensibility, and no difficulty, at the moment, seems too great to surmount for the preservation of a life in which every spectator feels himself most impressively concerned. This final burst of the chase is most dreadfully severe, particu-

larly if the last mile or two is run in view, when such is the case, the deer exerts all his utmost and remaining power to take the soil, if water is within his reach. This he sometimes does with the hounds so close to his haunches that it is impossible to prevent their plunging with him into the stream. In such a predicament, if it is found impracticable to draw off the hounds to insure his safety, the yeomen prickers and others are frequently seen above their middles in water (uncertain of its depth) to preserve the life of the deer at the hazard of their own. This may be considered by the recluse and cynic a degree of valour beyond discretion; but the debt of humanity, like the Hibernian major's word in the comedy, is a debt of honour, and must be paid."

Such is a description of a stag-hunt when George the Third was king, and in most of its points it may stand for the present day, though much of the parade and ceremony is now dispensed with, even at a meet of her Majesty's stag-hounds, and no yeomen prickers with their French horns are to be seen; while as to riding forward on the line of the deer, the public usually take that office on themselves (especially if there is a convenient road), much to the annoyance of both huntsman and hounds. The author of the last century, it must be owned, was much inclined to magnify his office, and did not allow it to want in dignity for the lack of high-sounding phrases and big words, and he seems to be describing rather a royal pageant or procession than a run with hounds. One thing he certainly bears testimony to—the *speed* of the old stag-hound—for of them the account was written, when he says that only blood horses could go by their side.

A peculiarity connected with hunting the carted deer I have not yet mentioned is that so many appear to think a gallop after him a fitting *finale* to the season; and about the last week in March, or the first in April, we see men sending off a couple of horses or more to have a day or two with the Queen's or the Baron's, who, in all probability, would never think of

hunting with stag-hounds during any other part of the year. Why this should be so it is hard to say, but any one acquainted with hunting men will allow that it is a fact. The same thing holds good with many masters of harriers, who get a deer to turn out, and give their friends and followers a gallop to finish up with—a practice that I hold in abomination, for several reasons, the first and foremost being that the deer so turned out is very unlike one that has been kept specially for the purpose, and time and care expended on getting him into condition to run before hounds. As a rule, he is a miserable wretch, bought from a dealer in such articles, who sends him or her, as the case may be, from London in some sort of box or crate, in which it can scarcely stand upright, and cannot turn round, where, for fear of accidents, it is kept until the time for turning out arrives. Then this cramped captive, generally a fallow buck or doe, is started on its sport-showing mission. How well the task is achieved may be easily imagined from the previous treatment it has received. As a rule the poor limbs refuse their office after a mile or two, and a miserable fiasco is the result. Sometimes, however, when men who know and understand the nature and management of deer take the thing in hand, better results are forthcoming, and I must confess I have seen a very smart gallop after a fallow buck turned out before harriers. Another objection—the greatest to a sportsman—is the taking hounds from their legitimate game—a course which always tends to disorganization, and brings them to the level of a lot of curs if persisted in. Why the harrier should be considered able to hunt deer with impunity I cannot conceive, or why a day at the end of the season should do him less harm than a day at any other time. Of one thing I am certain, viz., that no master of fox-hounds who took the slightest interest in his kennel, or had any respect for his office, would suffer his hounds to run deer one moment longer than the whips could get to their heads to stop them, on any consideration whatever; neither, I believe, would such men as the late Captain Evans, Mr. Dundas Everett, Mr.

Steyning Beard, Mr. James Dear, and other masters, who really pride themselves on their packs; but amongst harrier men there are unfortunately several of what I may term the nondescript class, who will hunt any and everything that they can get hold of.

I now come to the final objection to this kind of thing, and I fear to turning out deer generally, which is that, except in a very few countries, the farmers do not like it. They will stand fox-hounds; they don't complain of harriers properly conducted; but they draw the line at stag-hounds. It is only in a few instances that masters have had the tact to make their packs and sport popular, like the Rothschilds in the vale of Aylesbury, or Lord Derby in Surrey, but the cases are few and far between; and although they may not always object to them outright, their visits are, as a rule, looked on with no very favourable eye. There is no doubt but that the packs kept near London by the horse-dealing fraternity have tended in a measure to bring the sport into bad odour, as well as the miscellaneous crowds of men who are *not sportsmen* from London and other large towns, that patronize the staggers, and who are quite as offensive to the real sportsmen who seek their diversion with them, as they are to the people over whose land they trespass. It is very amusing to read of the feats of Old Billy Bean and others, in the Harrow district; but I fear that to him and his friends must be attributed, in a great measure, the hostility evinced to hunting in some parts of the Old Berkeley country, and some of the best parts,[1] I am sorry to say, where

[1] "Opposition to a Pack of Stag-hounds.—On Monday evening (Wednesday, June 10th, 1878), Mr. F. H. Deane, chairman of the Uxbridge bench of magistrates, called a meeting of the Harrow country farmers, at the Chequers Hotel, Uxbridge, for the purpose of opposing the Colleen Dale pack of stag-hounds, which are kennelled at the Hyde, Hendon. Mr. Deane said that the presence of the pack in the Harrow country did not appear to be at all satisfactory. The land was already subject to a considerable amount of hunting by the Queen's hounds, the Old Berkeley fox-hounds, and the Windsor Garrison drag-hounds; but he believed that the farmers were willing to patiently bear the damage which they were

I have had a farmyard gate slammed in my face, and a man standing with a pitchfork on the other side of it, ready to dispute my passage, not many seasons since—the proprietor of the pitchfork, and probably the gate also, lamenting audibly, and in choice language, that he had not been quick enough to arrest some half-dozen who were before me.

I have not been able to discover at what time the custom of turning out deer to hunt became prevalent—most probably about the middle of the eighteenth century, when many commons and forest lands began to be enclosed, and, in consequence, wild deer became scarce; while hunting merely within the bounds of their parks, after having pursued it in the open, did not suit our ancestors' notions of sport. Hence I expect a deer was caught from there and turned out, and thus the deer-cart came into fashion. Had Dean Swift been a sportsman, he would probably have thrown some light on the subject, as when he was staying at Windsor, in 1711, we find recorded, in his letters to Stella, that Queen Anne drove in a one-horse chaise forty-five miles, in the chase of a stag, but whether it was turned out or found wild in the forest he does not say, though we find that her Majesty was used to drive herself. The good dean appears to me more concerned about the sport interfering with his dinner than anxious to record the manner in which it was carried out. Probably the Queen hunted wild deer, as Pope in his "Windsor Forest," a couple of years later, speaks of stag-hunting

exposed to in respect of these packs, because they found that the masters were disposed to meet them in a liberal and gentlemanly manner. But he thought they all agreed that the present amount of hunting was quite as much as they were inclined to submit to. He believed that considerable damage had been already done by the Colleen Dale hounds. He added that a similar meeting had been held at Barnet. The meeting was unanimous in opposition to the pack, and a guarantee fund, headed by the chairman with a subscription of 20*l.*, was formed. A committee was formed, and invested with power to represent the subscribers in any proceedings that may be taken against the pack."

there in lines which certainly can only allude to the wild deer :—

> Now Cancer glows with Phœbus' fiery car:
> The youth rush eager to the sylvan war,
> Swarm o'er the lawns, the forest walks surround,
> Rouse the fleet hart, and cheer the opening hound.

It was later on in the century, and in the reign of George III., before the deer were removed from the forest and confined to the park.[2] Then, deer, which were known, and, indeed, had all their names, were roused, hunted, and saved if possible, and, finally, Farmer George came to rely solely on the cart for his pastime. Of course every one has heard of the Epping Hunt on Easter Monday. I chanced to meet with a very humorous description of the scene in the *Literary Gazette*, 1830, which I shall take the liberty of transcribing for the benefit of my readers, feeling sure that it cannot fail to amuse them :—

> The first time I 'unted I ne'er shall forget,
> 'Twas to Hepping I vent, and I got werry vet;
> The rain rattled down so unkimmonly fast,
> That I thought I should surely be drowned at last.
> My new leather breeches, though not werry thin,
> In less than a jiffey stuck tight to my skin;
> And my beautiful coat, of a beautiful green,
> The most beautiful bottle vot ever was seen,
> In the same little time vos all vet through and through,
> Which griewously wex'd me because it vos new.
> But seeing as 'ow I vos fairly let in
> For a sousing, I made up my mind for to grin;
> And grin then I did, first at this, then at that—
> At Apperley's coat and his shocking bad hat,
> At Higgins's 'oss, and at Higgins's boots,
> At the warious coats and the divers surtouts.
> But, oh! 'ow delighted I vos at the start!
> Ven the stag vos turn'd hout on the 'ill from the cart,
> And the 'ounds follow'd a'ter—the 'unt was begun,
> And, in spite of the veather, 'tvas capital fun;

[2] Windsor was disafforested in 1814.

Avay ve all scamper'd, men, 'osses, and all,
Till ve came to a leap, ven I came for to fall
Slap into a ditch; though I vasn't much 'urt,
I didn't much like being kiver'd vi' dirt;
But I thought it a trifle, for, looking around,
I saw lots of 'untsmen stretch'd out on the ground.
Amongst them was Higgins and Higgins's son,
In short, more vere hunder their 'osses than on.
I mounted again, clapp'd my spurs on, but zounds!
The never a bit vould my 'oss reach the 'ounds;
Thinks I, he is hinjured! I'll get off and see—
And, sure as a gun, he had broken his knee!
I thought that my 'unting vos now at an hend,
Ven a man who was thrown came and hoffer'd to lend
His 'unter, provided I'd let him have mine,
To go to a surgeon's—for he'd injured his spine.
The swap was heffected, and hoff at full speed
His hanimal started—no spurring he need;
He fairly ran off, but so little I cared,
The stag, 'ounds, and 'untsman amazingly stared,
As I distanced them all like a shot from a gun,
Or a cloud in tempest wot passes the sun;
Thinks I, he'll be tired afore the next mile,
So I gave him his 'ead till he came to a stile,
Ven I pulled him up sharp—but 'twas pulling in vain,
For hover he lept, and I fell hoff again.
This fall vos a sick'ner—I came on my nose,
And thought that my days had now come to a close,
Ven a friend pick'd me up—and a friend when in need,
As the proverb remarks, is a friend, sir, indeed.
He carried me 'ome, safe and sound to my wife,
Who swears to this day that John Brown saved my life,
Vich he sartainly did: so my blessings on Brown
For bringing me hup in his buggy to town.

Here we have in embryo the various stag-hunting establishments which time was to develope; for, say what we may, the catching your own again business may languish in the country, but to this day it is the favourite form of recreation with those whose business is in the modern Babylon. Many of them hunt, and go well with fox-hounds in the best countries,

but their heart is with the deer-cart. The following may be found in D'Urfey's "Pills to purge Melancholy," and will serve to show that in early times the good citizens affected to be sportsmen, as they do now, even if they could not ride quite so straight and well, but were more likely to cut such a caper as John Gilpin, or the gentleman who was taken home in Brown's buggy :—

Next once a year into Essex a hunting they go,
To see 'em pass along, O, 'tis a most pretty show;
Through Cheapside and Fenchurch Street, and so to Aldgate Pump,
Each man with his spurs in's horse's side, and his back-sword cross his rump.
My Lord, he takes a staff in hand to beat the bushes o'er,
I must confess it was a work he ne'er had done before.
A creature bounceth from a bush, which made them all to laugh;
My Lord, he cried, a *Hare*, a *Hare*, but it proved an *Essex calf*.
And when they had done their sport, they came to London where they dwell,
Their faces all so torn and scratch'd, their wives scarce knew them well;
For 'twas a very great mercy, so many 'scaped alive,
For of twenty saddles carried out, they brought home again but *Five*.

The good citizens had certain privileges of hunting from the earliest ages, but Stowe says, "These exercises were not much followed by the citizens of London at the close of the sixteenth century—not for want of taste for the amusement, but for want of leisure to pursue it." Deer-carts were not invented then, I presume, yet Strype, so late as the reign of George I., reckons "Riding on horseback, and hunting with my Lord Mayor's hounds, when the *common hunt* goes out," amongst their pastimes.

CHAPTER XXV.

HER MAJESTY'S STAG-HOUNDS.

Thus stand the pack,
Mute and unmoved, and crouching low to earth,
While pass the glitt'ring Court and Royal pair;
So disciplined those hounds, and so reserved,
Whose honour 'tis to glad the hearts of kings.
But soon the winding horn and huntsman's voice
Let loose the gen'ral chorus; far around
Joy spreads its wings, and the gay morning smiles.

In giving a description of hounds for the purpose of hunting the carted deer, I could do no less than take those of her Majesty, even had they not been the most ancient, as they undoubtedly are. Very probably the Kings and Queens of England have never been without such an appendage to the Crown since Egbert united the country under one ruler.

I am not, however, aware that anything authentic is to be learnt concerning them earlier than the days of Farmer George, when the Earl of Sandwich lived at Swinley and wore the golden couples, and a man named Johnson carried the horn, with ten yeomen prickers, in all the gay panoply of scarlet and gold, to assist either himself, their royal master, or the stag, as the case may be; and they commenced hunting on Holyrood Day, as the Druid tells us, at Charity Farm or Billingbear. After that he met regularly twice a week; and, as his horse carried nineteen stone of royalty, dressed in a light blue coat, and top-boots buckled up behind, I fear the gentleman who wrote the account of the royal stag-hunt, given a few pages back, must

have drawn somewhat lavishly on his imagination with regard to the pace they went, or the king saw little of it. They had, we learn from the same authority, a rattling day from Aldermaston to Reading, when his Majesty's horses were both knocked up, and he returned to Windsor in a cart, beguiling the way with country talk of stock and crops. I learn from another authority, and a very good one, that the king had, as many a scion of royalty has since, a pioneer or pilot, who jumped the fences before him. "Upon one occasion," says the author to whom I allude, "the leader had already performed his part, and the king was less eager to follow, the obstacle in question being somewhat greater than usual. 'John has gone over, your Majesty,' said a certain nobleman, anxious to recall the king from what he imagined to be a casual forgetfulness or absence of mind. 'Has he?' replied his Majesty, not much pleased with the interference; 'then you may go after him.' His Majesty liked a fifteen-hand, smart little horse, and had one called Perfection, which carried him for many years, but the bay Hobby was his Majesty's last and best. By the royal order, no hand but Mr. Davis's was permitted to shoot him."

On another occasion, they had a great run from Stoke, Colonel Vyse's place, near Slough, to No Man's Land in Hertfordshire, near St. Alban's. When the deer was taken, his Majesty asked what place it was, and, on being told No Man's Land, replied, "Then it's my land!"

Early in the present century, the Marquis of Cornwallis had the golden couples, and a man named Sharp carried the horn. The hounds were removed from the kennels in Windsor Great Park to Ascot Heath, where they now stand, on account of kennel lameness, but the remedy was not efficacious until Charles Davis came in office, and had false flooring put down, which set matters to rights. Sharp was terribly tried by it, and used to take the pack to Brighton and make them swim after him in a boat, but it was to little purpose. The old king took

immense interest in the kennel, and, after the removal to Ascot Heath, was often riding across and giving Sharp a fillip as to his kennel duties. Before closing the scene on the old stag-hounds, I must borrow one more anecdote from the Druid, in which he tells us how "Bill Bean (who was hunting six years before the present century) once begged permission to tell it to the late Prince Consort, when they were taking a deer in a cellar, that a rustic of that Georgian era believed his sovereign to have a lion for one arm and a unicorn for the other; or how the 'old workhouse dame,' when quite a girl, had seen the deer taken at Leatherhead, and years having created a little confusion in her mind, 'between the gayer dress of the huntsman, and the simple insignia of the king,' said, 'His Majesty had a scarlet coat and a jockey cap, with gold all about; he had a star on his breast, and we all fell on our knees.'"

A change, however, came over the whole establishment when, in 1815, the Goodwood pack was given to his Majesty, and the celebrated Colonel Thornton bought the whole forty couple of the old stag-hounds to go to France. Another and still greater change followed in 1821, when Sharp resigned the horn to his son-in-law, Charles Davis, who, from being whip to his father, who hunted the king's harriers, was promoted to carrying the pistols, with which the yeomen prickers guarded the king home of a night after a run with the stag, and having had altogether twenty-one years' probation in the royal service, at length found himself with the horn. Here, most emphatically, was the right man in the right place. And the Prince Regent, who, although long before forced to decline the pleasures of the chase, except as taken in the mildest way with beagles on the Brighton Downs, was a first-rate judge of sport as well as human nature, wrote to him on his appointment as follows:—"It delights me to hear that you've got the hounds; I hope you'll get them so fast that they'll run away from everybody." Truly the first gentleman of Europe had notions of

pace, in more ways than one, quite distinct from his father, and, if he could not ride up to them himself, liked the royal pack to cut out plenty of work for those who could; while no doubt he would have not been quite so catholic in the matter of pedigree when purchasing a hunter, for it is said of George III., that, having bought a horse, the vendor tendered a slip of written paper. "Eh! what's that?" inquired his Majesty; and, on being told it was the horse's pedigree, replied, "Keep it, my good man; it will do for the next you sell." The owner of Baronet, Escape, Maria, and others, would have viewed matters in a different light. Nay, if he could not ride, he liked to have first-class horses, only to show his friends, and did not stand for price either.

With the accession of Charles Davis to the horn, the Augustan era of the royal stag-hounds commenced, and under the mastership of such men as Lord Maryborough, the Earl of Lichfield, Earl of Errol, Lord Kinnaird, Earl of Rosslyn, Lord Chesterfield, Earl of Bessborough, and Earl of Sandwich, everything was carried out as a royal establishment should be; and we may be sure Davis remembered his first master's injunction, to breed them fast enough to run away from every one, as far as he was able, and, on some occasions, we know that he pretty well succeeded in so doing—in fact, the first half of his reign, before railways had brought the London crowds to the meets, was as near perfection as anything in connexion with hunting a turned-out animal can be. Davis himself considered that the nearer he approached to fox-hunting, the better was his sport, and there is no doubt he was right. The consequence was that many men, well known in the best hunting countries of England, were to be found at his fixtures, and a meet of the royal hounds meant, in that day, a gathering of some of the choicest spirits that the hunting world could produce.

William IV. never that I heard of hunted, and, being a sailor, had probably little taste for the chase; and our present gracious Queen, of course, fine horsewoman as she is, was not

often to be seen at a meet of the royal hounds, though I believe she has honoured them with her presence. The Prince Consort, also, preferred his harriers to the stag. The Prince of Wales, who received many valuable hints on riding from Davis, has often been out with the buck-hounds, and gone right well, in spite of being of late years what may be termed a welter-weight, as has the Princess.

To return to Charles Davis, as the Queen's huntsman he was pre-eminently the right man in the right place; and one who knew him well, and has written his biography, said, "The responsibilities of the office, which Charles Davis was called upon to fill from the year 1821 to 1866, were much greater than those which devolve upon other persons in a like situation. If an unruly field be any clog to the honest efforts of a huntsman, no man was more severely tried; and as it frequently happened that no master but himself was in the field, it required an amount of self-control which is not always consistent with vigorous action or language. Other men have the influence of their master, or the good feeling of the squirearchy to fall back upon, and have every excuse made for them, should an unfortunate outbreak of temper exceed just bounds. Conventuality does not hedge in the hard-riding huntsman of a pack of provincial fox-hounds. But the Queen's servant, in himself a master, too frequently dealing with unruly spirits, whose love of sport consisted in over-riding hounds on a cold scent, and riding to the stag on a good one, had to consider his position as well as the sport of his legitimate followers. He was not naturally a good-tempered man, and his delicacy of constitution, or rather digestion, made him irritable; but he performed this difficult part of his mission with marvellous tact. Years ago, I remember his fields consisted of the *élite* of society, when Sir Francis Grant's picture was a true representation of her Majesty's buck-hounds, and when the hard-riding cornets and captains of the household regiments (cavalry and infantry) from Windsor were his most unruly customers. Since that time,

stag-hunting in Berkshire has degenerated; and what with railroads and embryo sportsmen, with whom he had to deal on metropolitan days, his love of a hound must have been sorely tried. In him, upon these occasions, we saw, in *the best of servants, a man born to command.* No man could take a liberty with him."

As a huntsman—that is, an exponent of the art of capturing a wild animal—there was no chance of forming an opinion of Davis's qualifications, except in the few times when the hounds were taken into the New Forest, and the country was strange both to him and them. These outings took place just before my day, so I can say personally nothing about them; and, moreover, in April, the stag has not recovered the effect of the rutting season and his winter's hardships; so that, if they did not show the sport that is seen in Devonshire, it is little to be wondered at. I believe that Davis was, however, considered to have done all that was necessary as a huntsman to procure sport, and the crowds who there assembled were sent away satisfied. As a horseman Davis stood quite in the front rank, and was not to be beaten in any country, although there were "giants in those days;" and the party who met at the club which the Earl of Errol established in the Aylesbury Vale were by no means of the milk-and-water order. Lord Alvanley found that he was not to be caught in the great run from Salt Hill to the Old Berkeley kennels, and his lordship, who, as Wartnaby of Clipston said, was, with Gumley Wilson, the only two who "ever rode straight across his farm," had to play second —and a bad second too—to Davis. On another occasion he had twenty minutes the best of every one, on the first clipped horse he ever rode—consequently called the Clipper—and had no one save a miller and his men for that time to aid him in his ditch struggles with his deer. He rode all, or nearly all, his horses in a snaffle, for which many have been unable to account; but I believe the true solution is that he was by no means a strong man, though his seat was grace and elegance itself; and

in the long and tiring days he had to undergo he found he could take a little more liberty with his horse's mouth than in stronger bits; in fact, that he did from weakness—one who stood over six feet, and weighed only nine stone, could not have been very strong—what many heavy men do, ride on their horse's mouth at times, to ease themselves. With his fine seat and hands this did not matter, and whether it was over the Berkshire ploughs, the deep Harrow grass, or the Vale of Aylesbury doubles, he could not only hold his own, but often beat the field. A more perfect model of a horseman has never been seen, and not a little did he add to the picture of the royal procession on an Ascot Cup day—an exhibition in which he took great delight. He cared little to talk of either riding or horses, looking, as many of our best sportsmen have done, on one and the other as the means to an end—that end was to see his hounds work. Of course he had some very first-rate ones, and perhaps the best was Hermit, who had a savage disposition, and a pair of very queer-looking fore-legs. I believe he was by a thoroughbred horse called Grey-Skim out of a white mare that had been ridden by a trumpeter in the Life Guards. Davis was often painted on him, and he makes a most imposing central figure in Sir Francis Grant's Ascot Heath picture. It is said he was coarse and rawboned as a colt, when he might have been purchased for eighteen guineas—perhaps on account of his savage temper—but he became very handsome afterwards, and "Nimrod," in reviewing the picture alluded to above, calls him a "picturesque horse."

Another on which he is painted is the Traverser, who at one time was a good fair horse on the flat, but he came at a later date. During one of his Hampshire excursions he bought a bay mare called Cowslip, and was so pleased with her that he sent her portrait to her late owner, painted by his brother, with a view of Windsor Castle in the distance. The Miller's white fore-foot was preserved amongst his curiosities, and Eurus was an especial favourite. He said he had been equally well

carried by horses of all sizes from fourteen-three to sixteen-two, and had some half-bred Arabs, which had as much wear and tear about them as anything—the one by an English horse out of an Arabian mare, which carried him for nine seasons, being better than the one produced by the cross the other way. His last horse was Comus, given him by his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who had ridden him at Oxford, and at Mr. Davis's death the horse was shot at his especial desire, and an ear buried in the same grave with him. In hounds he stuck to the old Goodwood sort, which he said wore longest, and, unlike the great John Warde, had not the slightest objection to what, in kennel parlance, is known as a snipe-nosed hound. But I expect in his day, as in the present, they did not breed a very great number themselves, and relied, in a great measure, on drafts from the best fox-hound kennels to keep the pack up to the regulation standard.

I have hung long over the story of Charles Davis, because he was quite an exceptional man, and would have been so in any situation in life, and yet have not told half that might be said about him. However, wiry and enduring as he was, the old scythe-bearer at last wore him down; and, notwithstanding an arrangement was made by which Harry King, who was a son of Charles King, of Pytchley fame (and having come here from the Atherstone in 1835, and been for some years first whip), hunted the hounds, as in reality he had done for some years, Davis felt forced to send in his resignation. Her Majesty begged him to reconsider his determination—a kindness of which he was naturally most proud. However, the end was soon to come, for a bad fall confined him to the house, and at the end of the season he was permitted to retire. He was never destined to see another, and on the 26th of October, 1866, died apparently free from pain, and his funeral was attended by friends and admirers from all parts of the country.

Before taking leave of the grand old huntsman, I must, for a moment, revert to the almost national testimonial which was

presented to him in 1859, when all the principal hunting men of England were present at the dinner at Willis's Rooms, to do honour to the faithful old servant of the Crown, as well as one of the finest sportsmen of the day. This testimonial Davis left to her Majesty the Queen, and I venture to think that it must hold a very high place in the estimation of a sovereign who has always displayed so much solicitude and regard for the comfort and welfare of those who are in her service.

Harry King now stepped into the office which he had virtually filled so long, almost as a matter of course, and a very efficient huntsman he proved; but I fancy, had his life been spared (he held office for comparatively a short period), he was not the man to have taken the place or position which Charles Davis had done. True, he never had the chance, for railways had terribly altered the character of the field, and, in his day, "hunting with the Queen's" was a very different affair to what it had been when he first migrated from Atherstone to don the royal livery.

Let me again refer to the same eminent authority I have already quoted on this subject, and who had a double advantage beyond what I possess, of living as a man in the age in which I was only a boy, and being acquainted with most of the principal actors in the scenes he describes:—"From 1836 to 1851 many changes took place, and the facilities of moving both men and horses made a vast difference in the class which habitually met the hounds. D'Orsay was replaced by his own tailor, Lord Chesterfield was no longer there, and the drags which brought down the late Sir George Wombwell and Lord Adolphus FitzClarence, Harvey Aston, the Foresters—always amongst the hardest—Lord Cardigan, the late Duke of Beaufort, Colonel Anson, Lords Alvanley, Pembroke, Gardner, and the two Johnnies, Bushe and Best, and that most uncompromising customer, Lord Clanricarde, were no more." Would I had space to quote more from the same pen, and tell how D'Orsay, having nearly come to the end of Blackbird in a run after Rob Roy

from Salt Hill to three miles beyond Reading, and when only a few of the very best were left in it, found his broad-skirted pink split straight up the back as far as the collar, and his silk hat, the very smoothest of the smooth, smashed to a pancake; but I must hold my hand, and return once more to Harry King.

Charles Davis's successor was, as I stated a few pages back, a son of the celebrated Charles King, huntsman to Lord Althorp and Sir Charles Knightley, when they had the Pytchley country. Thus it will be seen that Harry King was well bred for his profession, and having been early initiated in the mysteries of horsemanship by riding a donkey (if I may be allowed the Hibernism), he was sent into the Warwickshire kennels, under Jack Wood, where he was well looked after. From thence he was drafted to Mr. Drake's kennels, under Ben Foot and Tom Wingfield (another capital school), and after a season went to Mr. Applethwaite with the Atherstone, where he remained five, and then, having been well entered to fox, changed to stag, and entered the royal service in 1836, which only terminated with his death. From the lowest rung of the ladder he climbed to the highest, and all who knew him would have been pleased to see him hold the horn for a much longer period. Instead of Lords Alvanley and Clanricarde, with whom he started, he had latterly to ride against London horse-dealers and night-house keepers; and on Pantaloon, by Hobbie Noble, and Antelope, he well held his own until the last. His favourite hound was Vigorous, which he considered the best he ever saw, and, for deer, the General and Beechnut were both good in his time; and Yateley, just at the commencement of his reign, gave them wonderful sport. Another, called the Doctor, after the historian of "Wild Stag-hunting in Devon and Somerset," was also good, and took them, in 1868, in one hour and three-quarters, from Denham into Paddington Station, and Mr. De Burgh told Lord Colville he was worth a hundred guineas. He might be to those who like to go home by train, but that is

just a matter of opinion, though he certainly redeemed his character by doing sixteen miles from point to point the next season in the same time, and being taken at Witney, near Oxford.

To King succeeded Frank Goodall, a brother of the celebrated Will Goodall, of Belvoir renown, and who was himself, before he became a Queen's huntsman, known and respected in the Cottesmore and Billesdon country, under Mr. Tailby. A fine horseman, a good judge of hounds, condition, and hunting—modest, civil, and obliging in his demeanour—no fitter man for the post could have been found; and I firmly believe that, if the glory of the old days is gone, it is the fault of the unruly masses that come out with him, and not that of Goodall or his hounds. In the present day, nearly every tenth man out has his favourite journal, to which he details his hunting experiences, and gives *his opinion* on the sport, no matter whether he knows anything concerning it or not; for, as it is an old axiom that every man thinks he knows how to drive a gig, so is it equally true that every man who can sit a horse over a fence thinks himself qualified to give an opinion on the merits of huntsman and hounds. Unfortunately for Goodall, the present age exceeds all that have gone before it in the love of scribbling, and, still more unfortunately, the royal buck-hounds is the pack of all others most infested with men who know least about hunting. It may be taken on presumptive evidence that a man fond of sport would never hunt a turned-out animal if he could hunt a wild one; hence the fact of their being found at Salt Hill or Maidenhead thicket would at once have stamped them, in the eyes of Warde, Conyers, Smith, or Musters, as no sportsmen. I do not mean to say that all to be seen there should be so classed, as many a good man tied for time may be glad of a gallop with the staggers "for his health's sake;" but I fancy he would be the last, should sport turn out not exactly according to his ideas, to be continually airing his grievances in public journals, and continually trying to disparage a really good man. This the cockney element, pure and

simple, have done in Goodall's case, and he has had to bear his share of the fierce light which beats upon a throne with a vengeance, since he has taken the royal horn. The best answer that could be given to the calumniators is the success that attended the trip of the royal buck-hounds into the Cottesmore country on April 10th, 1877, when the best of Leicestershire, Rutlandshire, and Northamptonshire, assembled to greet the man who was formerly such a favourite amongst them. The country was deep, the line a strong one, and

> Sad and fearful was the story of the hunt in Leicestershire;
> On that fatal field of glory met full many a dashing squire.

And fatal indeed it proved to the pretensions of many amongst them to hold the pride of place, for deer and hounds had the best of them throughout. Goodall and his pack showed that—given a fair field and no favour—they could well hold their own with the pick of the shires hard on their track, and blown, tired, or lame, was the verdict passed on many a gallant steed whose rider had tried to live with them in vain. After this the querulous carpings of those who hunt with the only national pack, and, having nothing to pay, take it out in grumbling, may well be passed over. In fact, the men who honoured Davis are passed away, and those who seek a little transient notoriety at the expense of others have usurped their place (the only notoriety they are ever likely to get), and the post of Queen's huntsman is by no means one to be coveted in the present day.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HARE-HUNTING.

Ah! there she lies; how close! she pants, she doubts
If now she lives; she trembles as she sits,
With horror seized. The wither'd grass that clings
Around her head, of the same russet hue,
Almost deceived my sight, had not her eyes,
With life full beaming, her vain wiles betray'd.

HAVING gone through the pursuit of what are considered the nobler beasts of chase, I now come to that of the hare—a sport which is in the present day much abused and run down, simply from the fact that people are either too blind or too perverse to appreciate its beauties. Moreover, there is a species of snobbishness, which affects to despise harriers, prevalent amongst men whom I may term "would-be" sportsmen, and who wish to be taken for such gluttons over a country, that hare-hunting does not afford scope for the display of their abilities. Such are as far from being sportsmen, in the true acceptation of the word, as a turn-spit is from a fox-hound. I never hear a man affect to despise harriers but I at once set him down as one who neither knows nor cares anything about hunting, and feel that his place is either riding after stag-hounds (carted deer), or the drag, unless, indeed, as is not unfrequently the case, what he says is all bluster and flourish, and he, for his own sake, should never venture beyond where macadam has already made his path straight. It is a strange thing that, although many of our most celebrated masters of hounds—men like Osbaldeston, Musters, Anstruther Thomson, and others, who have earned undying

fame with the horn, have either begun with, or, at any rate, hunted harriers—men who are no more to be named in the same day with the least amongst them than a rushlight is to be compared to a July sun at mid-day—affect to look down upon the sport of hare-hunting. I am quite willing to admit that a man in the prime of life, with good nerve, health, and plenty of horses, may crave for stronger meat, and more excitement than the chase of the hare can set before him—and perhaps I should say he was a bit of a muff did he not seek it in due season. But that is no reason he should despise, or affect to despise, a sport that will show him more of hounds and hunting in a given time than any other, if he only has eyes to see and ears to hear. No man would, I believe, care to live day after day on turtle and punch, venison and port, and other dishes and drinks which are held to form the acme of luxurious living. In time he would crave for plainer fare, and less stimulating viands; and, by the same rule, no true sportsman will despise a day or two occasionally with the harriers, in a country which is suitable for the sport. I don't care how hard a rider he may be, or how brilliantly he goes when there is occasion, your true houndsman will enjoy a day with the harriers, when probably you will see him trotting about as quietly as an old gentleman on a fat cob; but he will always be near enough to note what hounds are doing, and very probably taking a far greater interest in their work than others who have come out with them professedly to ride. I said before that no man can ride a chase unless he is a houndsman, and, as some exception may perhaps be taken to that assertion, I had better explain my meaning, which is, that no man can ride so as to make the most of his horse, and see the most of a good run, unless he notices and pays attention to the hounds in their work, stops as they check, and turns with them as they turn. I admit that many men who do not do this may ride bold and straight, have a good eye to ground and country, and knowledge of what their horse is doing, so that in a lark or steeplechase they may be

able to beat one who rides merely to hounds; but in the hunting-field he is sure in the long-run to have the best of them, and will often be going at his ease by the side of the pack, and in a good place, when they have ground to make up for not noting and taking advantage of what hounds are doing.

Every boy should be entered to harriers, not so much to teach him to ride as to teach him not to ride in the wrong place, and at the wrong time. He will, with hare-hounds, learn to pull his horse up as soon as there is a sign of a check, sit still and hold his tongue—lessons which it is only too evident, in the present day, the greater portion of those who go out have never learnt.

No doubt I shall have it cast in my teeth that Beckford, our greatest authority on the chase, wrote, "I never was a hare-hunter. I followed this diversion more for air and exercise than amusement, and if I could have persuaded myself to ride on the turnpike road to the three-mile stone and back again, I should have thought I had no need of a pack of harriers." Very true, but he could not persuade himself to do so, and, moreover, he tells us that he was at the pains to breed a very perfect pack of harriers between the slow-hunting harrier and the little fox beagle. "It was a difficult undertaking. I bred many years, and an infinity of hounds, before I could get what I wanted; I at last had the pleasure to see them very handsome, small, yet very bony; they ran remarkably well together, ran fast enough, had all the alacrity that you could desire, and would hunt the coldest scent. When they were thus perfect, I did as many others do, I parted with them." This is the man who would as soon ride six miles on the road as hunt with harriers, who takes such infinite pains to breed a perfect pack of them. No, no, Peter Beckford, parson as you were, that is not the truth; you would never have thus persevered in what you admit was a bad country for the sport, had you not liked harriers and their work. We, through your book (which I am much inclined to elevate to the place once claimed, with far less

reason, for "Uncle Tom's Cabin," that of being next the Bible), know you better than you knew yourself, and, despite the cloth, I am not sure that there was not a little of that worldly vanity peeping out in the first passage I have quoted, which makes us now affect to care nothing about hare-hunting. I have said in a former chapter that fox-hunting, as now enjoyed, is the outcome of civilization, cleared forests, and improved farming, and that now it is the most universal sport amongst us. In former days the hare occupied a similar position, and, as she was always to be found in the open, hunting her formed the sport of the bulk of the people. The stag and buck were reserved for king, nobles, and the high and mighty of the land, but the hare was open to the squire or rich yeoman who could afford to keep a pack of hounds, or "cry of dogs," as it was called amongst them, and no style of chase was so much esteemed for getting horses into condition to run trail scents and matches as that of the hare.

Gervase Markham says in his "Cavalrie," published 1616, speaking of the hare, "But to conclude and come to the chase, which is, of all chases, the best for the purpose whereof we are now entreating, it is the chase of the hare, which is both swift and pleasant, and of long endurance. It is a sport ever readie, equally distributed, as well to the wealthy farmer as to the great gentleman. It hath its beginning contrary to the stag and bucke; for it begins at Michealmass, when they end, and is out of date after April, when they first come into season." A century later, as I have before shown, the fox and hare had reversed places in public estimation, and from that time the manlier and bolder diversion has held the lead. There is no doubt that a great deal of the sarcasm vented on the chase of the hare arises from men going out to hunt without in reality knowing what they go to do or see. If I meet a man got up within an inch of his life, and mounted on a two hundred guinea hunter, going to meet harriers, I at once put him down for a fool, unless I know that he is merely about to give the

said horse a canter by way of getting him into condition. Personally I should as soon take the royal buck-hounds to catch a rabbit as go hare-hunting in such form, and they would be just about as much in place as a man who comes out to ride hard with harriers. It is a chase not perhaps suited for enthusiastic men in the prime of life, for, as Talleyrand said of diplomacy, above all things there must be no zeal. The huntsman has to do little more than act the part of a spectator, and his field should think no more of having any hand in the business transacted for their amusement than they would of joining in chorus at the opera. I conceive that a man may be a very great singer, and yet content to sit still and hold his tongue while a Patti or Nilson is singing. By the same rule Jem Mason himself, or the best man who ever crossed a country, should be content to drop his mantle for the time that he is out with harriers. A very little quiet riding will, in nine cases out of ten, show him all that there is to be seen of the hunting, and, when that is done, his mission is accomplished. The hare does not run far away, except in rare instances, hence the chase of her is by no means calculated to confer distinction either on man or horse, in a riding sense, although both one and the other may use it as an admirable school wherein to acquire the art of going to hounds when judiciously used. The hare generally depends for her safety on the marvellous instinct with which nature has endowed her, for what is technically called making work (that is, traversing and retraversing the ground) to puzzle the hounds. This work the true harrier will, when given time, puzzle out with almost unerring instinct, and it is seeing this done which constitutes the real beauty of hare-hunting. Fishing has been called the contemplative man's recreation; there can be no doubt but hare-hunting is the sport for the contemplative hunting man. A certain amount of excitement attends the chase of the stag and fox, because these are animals that will keep going, and time lost with them is seldom regained. With the hare it is altogether different; she

seldom keeps far before the hounds, and, if I may use the term, depends more on her intellect than speed to escape them until really hard pressed at the last. There is a fashion now to get very fast hounds, and clapping them on the back of their game as soon as she is found, so press her, as it is said, to drive her out of her country, and make her run straight, when she is generally run into and killed at the end of twenty or five and twenty minutes, when you may hear men congratulating themselves on the capital spin they have had. With all due deference, I submit that this is not hare-hunting at all, but simply a bad imitation of fox-hunting, stag, drag, or anything else that you like—in fact, a slow kind of coursing, in which the odds are all on one side; and had not the hare oftentimes a strong ally in the impetuosity of those who follow the hounds, and generally drive them over the line too far for it to be recovered, she would have a very poor chance indeed. Men may call it sport, the same as they call shooting pigeons from a trap sport, or standing at a warm corner with a couple of loaders behind them at a battue; but, in reality, it is neither more nor less than a burlesque. No animal can be said to be hunted fairly and well unless it has full scope given to display all its powers for self-preservation; and in seeing those pitted against the nose of the hound and the skill of the huntsman lies the real pleasure of all hunting, and more especially of hare-hunting. There are few things more beautiful than this to the man fond of hounds, and the gourmand would as soon think of bolting a choice morsel before he could detect the flavour, as he would of interfering with it by an injudicious cast or holloa. With a fair scent, and a good pack of hounds, there is very little fear of the hare running them out of scent, and, unless when entering puppies or blood is very much needed, harriers should never be interfered with, unless the huntsman has reason to suspect that they are running heel—a fault which, when left entirely to themselves, they are apt to fall into.

The fox must be killed handsomely—raced into, as it were—to

ensure perfection of sport; hence he requires a man to hunt him who combines quickness with judgment, and has a certain amount of dash, and a hound that will of himself fling and try forward when off the line, instead of pottering to regain it at the same place. Both one and the other are totally out of place in hunting the hare; the man cannot be too quiet, as Beckford said, a cross of the silent gentleman with the family of a good huntsman would be about the thing if you wanted to breed one, and the hound should hunt in a closer style, and with less dash than the fox-hound. True, I would not have them potter and tie on the scent; but there is the just medium between the two, which must be seen to be appreciated, as it cannot be described on paper. When once seen, it will never be forgotten. That is the true style for a harrier, whether he is large or small. I have seen dwarf fox-hounds very perfect, and, when left entirely alone, they will come nearly to this style, although there is always a difference to my mind, where there is a harrier cross, but the slightest indiscretion on the part of huntsman or field, and you see them as wild as hawks; they get their heads up, and are ready for any mischief in a moment; then you may hunt the hare yourself, as soon as she begins to make work, for all they care. Very tenderly handled, and judiciously used, they are not to be always objected to on wild, open downs, where hares run strong and straight; but even there I think the true harrier, well selected for size and strength, will show more sport, and, in the long run, kill more hares. I remember once a friend of mine was driving along a road near which a pack of harriers was at work; and, being very fond of hunting, he pulled up to watch them. The hare, nearly beaten, came down a long turnip-field to within ten yards of where he was, turned, and ran her foil half way up the field again; sat and listened a moment, then, with a tremendous bound, threw herself sideways from the track, and lay close. "Well, pussy," he said to himself, "now I shall see a bit of hunting, and, if they cannot find out your move for themselves, I will never tell."

Down the field came the pack in full cry to where the hare had turned, when of course they checked, and were at fault for a long time; at length an old bitch turned, and picked out the foil, back inch by inch to where the hare had sat up and listened. Her master had sense enough not to interfere with her, and was rewarded by getting his hare up again and killing her. That is what I call true hare-hunting. With many men and packs I could name there would have been no more chance of killing her than of taking a wild deer with lap-dogs. Another remarkable instance I have heard of the sagacity of a harrier; he was an old hound, and when he came to the spot at which his game had turned on her foil, he would stand still, and let his companions make their cast forward; as soon as he saw them beaten, he would open with a particular note, as much as to say, "What a pack of fools you are!" work out the line, and set them right.

Before leaving the subject of hare-hunting I must touch on the different kinds of country which are suitable for it or the reverse, and reiterate what I wrote in my chapter on fox-hunting, as to many parts being totally unfavourable to this sport. The first great requisite in a hare-hunting country I take to be, that you can see the work of your hounds without much impediment or difficulty. Hence a cramped, thickly enclosed country is very unfavourable, unless, indeed, you kept harriers for the sole purpose of making young horses into hunters, for which nothing could be better. In such a country, hares, as a rule, run short, making small rings. It is also awkward for harriers of a proper size, as, unless you have largish hounds, they cannot get over the fences, and very small ones that could smeuse would soon tire in the wet and dirt. I once heard of a master of harriers who invited a huntsman to fox-hounds to have a day with him in a very big, stiff country, and the huntsman assured me that he actually saw the master and whip *catching the hounds and throwing them over* some of the fences. In such a country I should be inclined to try foot-

beagles, and turn home when they began to tire, if I must go hare-hunting at all. The Shires, good as they are for fox-hunting, are decidedly not happy hunting-grounds for harrier men, and one who is passionately fond of the sport has told me that he does not care to go out there. In fact, tempting as the big pastures look, hares do not much care to face the fences, but run short, and, where there is a bit of plough, stick to it most tenaciously. As a rule, countries which are bad for fox-hounds are good for harriers, and the reverse; although I am sorry to say I could name many countries that are bad for both, I could pitch on few, if any, that are good for both.

Open downs, such as are found in the South of England, are favourable to this sport, and in the northern counties there are tracks of moorland in which harriers will show capital fun. Although packs of hare-hounds are often kept in the neighbourhood of large and fashionable towns, such places are by no means most favourable for the amusement, because such large fields join them, and hare-hunting, to be thoroughly enjoyed, should be pursued in select company. A few people, and those all sportsmen, is the thing; with a large crowd spread about all over the place, as they soon become, it is impossible that hounds can do themselves justice, or that their work can be properly enjoyed by those who go out to see it. Here, if anywhere, I would excuse a man keeping fox-hounds for the sport, as often his only chance is to race right away from and shake off the crowd; then, if he over-runs the scent, and loses his game, as most probably he will do, go and find another as quickly as possible. It is a very bastard kind of affair, however, and few who know what hunting really is care for it.

Where the country is good, the fields small, and the hounds left alone, many first-rate men, who have made a name in the crack countries, have declared that hare-hunting was the nearest approach, as far as enjoyment went, to fox-hunting on the grass. Hares, in such a country as I speak of, run strong and well, at times making a three or four mile point before commencing

much work, so that you really get a gallop, and, from the nature of the country, can see all that goes forward. In Ireland this sport is much more appreciated than in England, and the Irish hares are said to be stronger, and run straighter than ours. Never having hunted in the "gem of the sea," I can offer no opinion on the subject, but I know that some packs hunt a fine grass country divided by walls, and that the hounds are as carefully bred from the best fox-hound strains, as the Quorn, or Belvoir themselves. Such were (I suppose still are) the Killultagh, where the men turned out in scarlet, and the whole thing was done in first-rate style. In conclusion, let me advise all my readers whose lot may be cast in a good hare-hunting country—that is to say, a light, open one—to let no pride or prejudice keep them from enjoying the sport; and if they will only consider that they go out to see hunting (or should do so), and not to ride over the hounds or each other, that they are hunting a timid but exceedingly cunning quarry, and that the business of the hounds is to unravel her devices rather than race her to death before she can make them, they will, I think, own (especially if they have been heretofore riding about all day long in big woodlands, with deep, sloughy ridings) that they have found a new pleasure.

Hunting, like many other things, depends a great deal on the point of view from which we look at it; and the rock on which so many men split is looking at every kind of chase in the same light, viz., as the means of giving people the chance to gallop and jump, instead of attempting to fathom the mysteries and peculiarities of each, running down some because they do not display characteristics which, from their nature, it is impossible that they should have. I once heard a man say that a pack of fox-hounds which had worked out a cold scent "hunted like beagles." "Then that is just how they should not hunt," rejoined an M.F.H., who knew as much of, if not a little more about hunting than any man in England. Would the shooter like to see his clumbers range like high-bred setters,

or his pointers pottering round him after the manner of spaniels? Of course he would not. Why, then, should we, in hunting, expect to bring everything to one dead level, one standard of excellence, let that standard be ever so high? Somerville knew better, and wrote,—

> A different hound for every different chase
> Select with judgment.

Even the old blue mottle, slow as he is, has his uses, and there are yet countries where he is the right hound in the right place. There is no country that hounds cannot be bred to suit, and show sport over, but if a man expects all hunting to be like a quick thing with the Quorn, unless his means enable him to go to Melton, he had better turn to some other amusement. Let him not, therefore, look with contempt on men who will hunt under any circumstances rather than not hunt at all—men in whose hearts the love of hounds and their work is so engrafted that hunting in any shape is a pleasure to them. To these ardent spirits it is astonishing what amusement may be derived, even from a pack of foot-beagles, and I, for one, should very much like to see the style of hunting, in which the man who only owns a thick stick, and a pair of hob-nailed boots, can join as well as the owner of a stud of hunters, more prevalent, because I am convinced that the more innocent pleasures are placed within the reach of the public, the better they will be in every way, and I am in accord with the old clergyman who said he had no time to sin in the winter, for he hunted six days a week, and preached twice on Sundays.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE HARRIER.

It is admirable to observe the natural instinct of enmity and cunning, whereby one beast, being as it were confederate with man, by whom he is maintained, serves his designs upon others. A curious mind is exceedingly satisfied to see the game fly before him, and after that hath withdrawn itselfe from his sight to see the whole line where it hath pass'd over, with all the doublings and cross-works which the amazed beast hath made, recovered again, and all that maze wrought out by the intelligence which he holds with dogs. This is most pleasant, and, as it were, a masterpiece of natural magique.—C. WASE.

IN the present day no hound is to be found of so many different types, sizes, and varieties as the harrier. In fact, he ranges from four-and-twenty inches down to fourteen, and varies as much in style of hunting and formation as in height. The earliest British harrier, in my opinion, is the old Manchester or Southern hound, no doubt a native of Britain, and used before the time of the Romans in the chase of large game by the Ancient Britons. Whittaker, in his "History of Manchester," says,—"This, the good old hound of our Mancuman fathers, which is so remarkably distinguished over all the rest of the kingdom by the peculiarity of its aspect and the peculiarities of its frame; and this must certainly have been the fine original from which the many striking and picturesque touches in those well-known lines of Shakespeare were immediately transcribed:—

HIP.—I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear

With hounds of Sparta: never did I hear
Such gallant chiding: for, besides the groves,
The skies, the fountains, every region near
Seem'd all one mutual cry: I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

THE.—My hounds are bred out of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, so sanded; and their heads are hung
With ears that sweep away the morning dew:
Crook 'need and dew-lapp'd like Thessalian bulls;
Slow in pursuit, but match'd in mouth like bells,
Each under each, a cry more turrable
Was never holloa'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,
In Crete, in Sparta, nor in Thessaly.

"This delineation is evidently taken from life, and the largeness of the chaps and the dapples of the body, the ample sweep of the slouching ears, and the large exuberance of the bagging chest, the deforming crookedness of the knees, the sonorous depth of note, the heavy slowness of the motion, are all such clear and characteristic particulars as occur only in the Mancuman breed. This breed was in all probability once known in every part of the island. This breed was, near the close of the last century, confined to one or two counties in the South-Western regions of the island, and to Manchester and its vicinity in the North-Western. This breed is now utterly extinct in the former, and survives only in the latter; and the great size and the present fewness of this remarkable race pretty plainly proclaim them to be natives of this island, and to be the last perishing remains of a British breed within it. Once lost in the North, the dog was still continued in the South, and had there the honour to be delineated by the just, bold pencil of a Shakespeare. Once lost in the North, the dog was first introduced into it again from the South, and bears, therefore, at Manchester, the expressive appellation of the Southern hound; and being originally carried from Manchester into many of the neighbouring districts, and even into some of the southern counties, it there retains the note of its recenter

descent in its appellation of the Manchester or Lancashire hound; but it has been long neglected by carelessness or design. The characteristic bulk of the hound has been gradually diminishing for some time, and this old and valuable breed is gradually dwindling away into little more than a larger generation of common harriers."

In this I quite agree with Whittaker, thinking that this hound is entirely distinct from the St. Hubert, or bloodhound, which I take to be an imported breed. And no one who has ever heard the bell-like notes of Southern hounds—and they are still to be heard in one or two places—will at once be struck by the difference there is between them and the deep roar of a pack of bloodhounds. That these hounds were used by the Celts and Saxons for large game there is no doubt; and probably they were much more powerful than anything to be seen now, while their slow pace and fine voices, which by any one keeping down wind can be heard for miles, would be an immense advantage to those following the chase on foot, as our Saxon ancestors we know did. That the English hound was early valued we learn from Gratius, writing in the time of Augustus, who says,—

> But can you waft across the British tide,
> The land undanger'd on the further side;
> O! what great gain will certainly redound
> From a free traffic in the British hound!
> Mind not the badness of their form or face
> That the sole blemish of the generous race,
> When the bold game turns back upon the spear,
> And all the furies wait upon the war.
> First in the fight the whelps of Britain shine,
> And snatch, Epirus, all the palm from thine.

Claudian also says,—

> The British hound
> That brings the bull's big forehead to the ground.[1]

[1] No doubt many will contend that these quotations refer to mastiffs, bull-dogs, or Alaunts, as they were formerly called; but I very much

Probably, as large game became extinct, and the hare was principally hunted, the size of the hound was reduced in the same manner as the Irish wolf-hound has dwindled into what is now known as the Scotch deer-hound; and so the old Southern hound in time became the parent of the blue-mottled harriers, many of which now resemble him in everything but size. In fact, Mr. Brooks, of Box-hill, near Hastings, has a pack of nearly pure Southern hounds at the present day, and I feel sure some of them stand twenty-four inches in height; but I shall have more to say concerning them in another chapter. Sir Humphrey de Trafford has a pack as nearly similar in character in Cheshire; but I have never seen them in the field, though I had the good luck, a few years ago, to be present at a show at Manchester where they were exhibited.

Where the common harrier came from I do not know; but as I think Whittaker has made out such a good case for the Southern hound, I will give his opinion, and allow my readers to judge for themselves, merely remarking that there are to be seen at the present day many kinds of harriers, which show little or no affinity to the blue mottle or Southern hound.

He says, "The Romans seem to have introduced the present breed of our common hare-hounds, and the present race of our common spaniels. The former are pretty certainly foreigners, as their only game, the hare, could never have been hunted by the primeval Britons. And they are most probably Tuscans." Nemesianus has given us the following account of the Tuscan dog, and the description I think agrees with the common hare-hound:—

> Nor on the file of hunters last is found
> The merit, Tuscans, of your native hound;
> What though their form be shagg'd with roughening hairs,
> Nor one gaunt semblance of the greyhound bears,

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doubt if these were ever used in chase, for the simple reason that with an animal which ran at all, before turning to bay, they would not have had speed enough to be there when most needed.

> Still will the table thank their useful care,
> Served with the frequent banquet of the hare;
> They snuff her footsteps on the scented mead,
> They thread her mazes to her secret bed.

If we allow that there is either sense or reason in this suggestion, we come at once, I think, on the ancestors of the rough-haired harriers which are to the present day to be seen in Wales and other mountainous districts, of which Nimrod said, "By their fine noses and perseverance they would prove a match for anything," and which really did for centuries hunt all kinds of game, as continental packs do, I believe, at the present time, as well as some in our own tight little island. Very probably also from them came the otter-hound, as well as perhaps some of the rough-coated continental hounds, in which a great resemblance to the red Welsh harrier can be seen; but with them I have nothing to do, and it boots little to inquire at this time whether they are descended from these or the Segusians of the Celts. Probably they and our own rough hounds owe something to each race.

I now come to the most common harrier of the present day—one of the busiest, hard-working, and most beautiful little animals it is possible to conceive; and in the best packs I think I may give them a range of from fifteen to eighteen inches in height. When well and highly bred, their heads are very fine, with a softer and less varmint expression than the fox-hound, but very much like them in other respects. The ear is less large and the throat cleaner than in the blue mottles, and, in fact, the frame approaches very nearly to the fox-hound model; but I have been told by many masters of harriers that they find it almost impossible with pure harrier blood to obtain the straight fore-leg and fine foot, by which fox-hound breeders set so much store. This may probably be on account of limited walks, and consequent want of choice in the young ones put forward, as every one who knows anything of kennel management is aware how exceedingly few fox-hounds out of a limited

number would be considered eligible in one of our crack kennels. And any one, who has looked over packs supplied principally from drafts, will bear me out when I say that good legs and feet are the exception rather than the rule in them, and that a hound showing them in perfection has generally a grave fault in some other part.

Though the harrier should have as near as possible the form of the fox-hound, he should have a different voice; and I would undertake to tell by the ear alone, if I could hear them running, a pack of fox-hounds from real harriers. Neither must he work in the same dashing style, for, although I would by no means allow him to dwell and puddle, he should work closer, or he will go beyond the doubles of his hare, and in working them out is the true beauty of the sport. He should be, in fact, a little busy-body, very quick, very keen, and withal very patient and fine-nosed, seldom requiring help from his huntsman, and still more seldom a rate from the whipper-in. There are many packs in the present day such as I have endeavoured to describe, but very few of them, I fancy, without some little stain of fox-hound blood; in fact, it is difficult to get hounds quick and energetic enough to suit present ideas without it, except in very peculiar countries. Nevertheless, by breeding back again, all the harrier characteristics are kept up.

Beckford says,—

"The hounds I think most likely to show you sport are between the large, slow-hunting harrier and the little fox-beagle. The former are too dull, too heavy, and too slow; the latter too lively, too light, and too fleet. The first species, it is true, have most excellent noses, and I make no doubt will kill their game at last, if the day be long enough; but, you know, the days are short in winter, and it is bad hunting in the dark. The other, on the contrary, fling and dash, and are all alive; but every cold blast affects them, and if your country be deep and wet, it is not impossible that some of them may be drowned. My hounds were a cross of both these kinds, in

which it was my endeavour to get as much bone and strength in as small a compass as possible."

This must have been, I think, the nucleus of the modern harrier as generally understood, though in the present day it is not easy to arrive exactly at what Beckford meant by the fox-beagle. However, he appears to have hit on what he thought desirable for the chase of the hare, and no doubt many others, as the country was more opened, did the same. Add a slight dash of fox-hound blood, and you have, I conceive, a pack of the type of the late Captain Evans's—real little wonders when I saw them—Mr. Dundas Everett's, or the Earl of Pembroke's (late Mr. Walter Flowers'), although I should surmise that fox-hound blood has been a stranger to these kennels for many generations, and, indeed, hounds of this class are so numerous now that, by an interchange of blood, they may well be kept up to the standard of perfection without it. I believe Mr. George Race, of Biggleswade, has a pack, each one of which is worthy to sit for its portrait, but I must own to never having seen them.

Besides these, there is another type of harrier I have often seen in the West of England, though never, to my knowledge, a pack of them. These are from nineteen to twenty inches high, fine in the head, clean neck, well formed, and of a lemon or rather sandy and white colour. Their noses are said to be good, and I have been told that a few years ago there was a subscription pack of them at Plymouth, hunted by a man named Yelverton, and they have been spoken of to me as peculiar to Devonshire and the West of England. A few couples mixed with fox-hounds, with which they matched badly in every way, and here and there an individual specimen is all I have seen; but there was certainly enough character in common amongst them to make me believe that hounds of that type must at one time have existed, and I think very probably the old stag-hound, of which I have before spoken, is accountable for them—hence their being found in Devon and Somerset,

where he lingered last, and, as I have shown, the Rev. Mr. Froude bred from him a pack with which he hunted any and everything.

Before leaving the subject of harriers, I must say a few words on the smallest of the kind—the beagle—which, although more generally used for the gun, is nevertheless in some places still kept for hare-hunting pure and simple, generally by those who like to follow the sport on foot; but occasionally they are used with horses, and I remember a charming little pack, kept near Dulverton by the late Mr. Hole, well known in the coursing world. I should imagine these were not over fourteen inches, but so quick were they that one autumn morning I saw them rattle up two brace and a half of hares on Timberscombe Hill in a very short time. This quite disproves Richardson's assertion "that beagles have now gone quite out of fashion, as well on account of their slowness and inefficiency in point of strength as from their being too clamorous—too noisy—dwelling, likewise, so long upon the scent that their game has time to play all manner of tricks with them. They are now never kept in packs, being used merely to go out with the greyhounds as finders, for which purpose they answer admirably well." Mr. Richardson would have changed his opinion could he have seen this beautiful little pack, for anything quicker or merrier I never saw. They hunted to perfection, and a man must have been a very stout runner who could have kept up with them. In fact, at times our horses had to gallop for it.

There is an account of a pack of beagles kept for rabbit-hunting in Idstone's book on "The Dog," which I shall take the liberty of quoting, as it is amusing. He says,—

"At the present time the best pack probably ever seen or bred is kept by Mr. James Crane, of Southover House, near Dorchester. His standard is nine inches, and, owing to their wonderful hind-quarters and general frame and development, they can account for a rabbit in about five minutes. I believe that Mr. Crane originally took to the beagles to rid himself of the rabbits, which had become quite an annoyance on some of

his furze and moorland, and which, from the nature of the ground, were always beating him in his efforts to keep them within bounds. On this wild tract, which forms a wide district, commencing about a mile from his house, there is every chance for the rabbit, if pursued by ordinary means. Ferreting is difficult, for the old earths are deep, intricate, and extensive. It is always a great treat to me to have a day's hunting with these beautiful beagles.

"A very few years ago Giant was the dwarf of the pack—now he is drafted as too large; whilst, as to formation, they are equal to the Poltimore or Belvoir hounds. They go through the performance of a regular pack with supreme gravity (as fox-hounds would think, if they do think), like a set of puppets. It has a serio-comic appearance to see Mr. Crane start from his Liliputian kennel, with its dog doll's-house furniture of troughs and beds, followed by a pack of hounds not so large as rabbits, of the recognized colours and markings, and with all the importance (I am writing of the beagles, mind, and not of Mr. Crane) of full-sized stag-hounds—a sort of attempt at dignity which Tom Thumb, now in middle life, might assume if a lady, forgetting that she saw in the mannikin the father of a family of pigmies, took him in her arms to kiss him as of yore.

"Mr. Crane, on his model little black hunter, with the horn, all regular, seems scarcely able to repress a smile as he starts to draw his coverts for a tough old buck, though it will be no joke to get away from Clamerous, Pansey, Duster, Gamester, Chimer, Rally, Goldfinch, and the rest of them; and the heart of their game must beat faster in his 'form' as he feels the gorse shaking, or catches a glance of these busy sterns feathering as they plunge in, and presently open in full chorus, and, as they get a view and race at him 'with their sterns down,' poor bunny comes back to them so fast that we expect to see him rolled over presently. However, he doubles through some rushes and yellow ferns, and they 'throw up.' The black pony and the master pick their way deliberately amongst the furze

clumps, and wait patiently as the pack brush between the dwarf hunter's legs, and he lifts one foreleg to let a cluster of them get by more readily. Presently Chimer hits it off, and stands still to throw up his head and toss back his ears as he opens, and then they pick out the scent in Indian file, opening one after another, as they acknowledge it, like the notes of a harp. Presently the rabbit 'breaks' (I trust I may be allowed the expression), and they press him down hill, across the little pond where the mallards spring, and the sluggard of a woodcock rises from his siesta, after a middling flight from Iceland or thereabouts, and in exactly five minutes by my watch the pack are tugging at him, Mr. Crane in the middle, seemingly at a distance looking for the queen amongst a swarm of bees."

There, if that is not as pretty a picture of a miniature hunt as man need wish to read, I hope Idstone will take summary vengeance on me for having quoted it, and anathematize me with "bell, book, and candle." Truly, though, ever since I first read it I have had a strange longing to see that little pack at work, and would go some miles to see them run handsomely into a couple or two of old bucks. He tells us they are level "at tough and in pace, good in colour, shape, and make, but difficult to breed and rear." I have seen some very handsome ones in my time used for rabbit-hunting, notably the pack kept, a few years ago, by Mr. Arthur Yates, of Bishop's Sutton, in Hants, and his brother Trevor, but they never quite came up to the picture here so ably drawn. I have quoted this to show how much real sport there still is amongst us completely unknown to the general public, and how many sources of health and amusement are within the reach of nearly all, that they totally fail to see and appreciate. No doubt Captain Crasher may think very small beer of such a chase; but it is real hunting, after all, and many would be glad to get it.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BROOKSIDE HARRIERS.

As some brave captain, curious and exact,
By his fix'd standard forms in equal ranks
His gay battalion, ...
So model thou thy pack.

One of the most celebrated packs of harriers that have ever come under my notice is the Brookside, and none could I find more worthy of record in a work like the present, as they are not only quite a different type of hound from any others that I have seen, but no pack can boast of having more ancient blood in the kennel than these, nor hounds which have had so little admixture from other packs in their veins. Whence they were derived in the first place I have never been able to ascertain, but no one accustomed to notice hounds could fail to see that they possess very distinctive characteristics which point to a breed carefully preserved for a great number of years. In height, colour, and size, they nearly approach fox-hounds, as they are quite two and twenty inches high, with powerful frames, totally devoid of lumber, and their colour is that known as a very rich Belvoir tan. It may be said this description would do for fox-hounds, and so it would, but I will venture to assert that, put a fox-hound into the Brookside kennels, and he would look as much out of place as a pointer would, and be as easily detected. In style and character they are totally dissimilar, and, for that matter, they are equally unlike the heavy blue mottled or the small beagle harrier. I have seen it stated that they are a cross

of harrier and fox-hound, and it is true, insomuch as occasionally, at very long intervals, a fox-hound sire has been used amongst them, such a course being occasionally inevitable, as there is no other kennel of their own sort in the world to which they could go for change of blood, and without an occasional outcross they must have dwindled and degenerated. But the fox-hound cross has not been persevered in; and the infusion of new blood obtained, they have been very carefully bred back to their old characteristics, and thus the family likeness has been kept up. Certainly in no other pack have I seen such a striking likeness as in this. Another cross they have had of late years is from a hound of Major Gaisford's, who kept harriers near Worthing (of what type I do not know, never having seen them), and here again I believe the same system has been observed as when using a fox-hound. These infusions of fresh blood, however, are very seldom resorted to, and they depend entirely on their own sires as a rule, so that it is a wonder that the pack has been kept up to the state of perfection in which we now find it—a fact which proves what an immense amount of vitality there must be in the breed. As they do not go to other kennels, so are they equally chary of allowing the blood to go out of their own hands; and it would be nearly as difficult to get a stud-hound from them as to obtain an Arab mare of the Nedjid caste. In fact, I have heard that a neighbouring master of harriers, in his anxiety to procure some of the blood, once resorted to the following ruse:—He found out at what hour there would be probably no one about at the kennels, and, taking a bitch in season in a light cart or some similar conveyance, drove quickly over and turned her into the kennel amongst the lot, trusting to chance as to the paternity of the whelps, and then, after a little time, went and claimed her again. How the scheme turned out I cannot say, though I certainly saw some hounds in the kennel of the concoctor thereof which were said to have a Brookside cross in them.

Neither is any draft ever allowed to leave the kennel, those

hounds which are not put forward for their own use being invariably made away with. In chase they are very fast, and I should say there is little if any difference in their pace and that of the highest-bred fox-hounds when running on a high scent. In fact, I heard a man, who had for years hunted hare with pure-bred fox-hounds, once, after attempting to ride up to them in a quick thing on a mare which had won several races, say, "I did not think the great fat beggars could have gone the pace." It is a peculiarity also of theirs that they stand bringing out big in condition, and I have seen them go well with such an amount of flesh on them as would have stopped most hounds. Perhaps it is to this cause that I fancied they were rather light of bone for their size. I have never seen any of them measured, but, judging by the eye alone, I should certainly say they had not the same amount of bone as fox-hounds of the same height.

In their style of hunting there is as much difference to other hounds as in their outward appearance. They have not the dash and fling of the fox-hound, the bustling activity of the beagle harrier, or the slow-hunting ways of the Southern hound. As I have said, they go a great pace, and appear to have the faculty of turning with the scent without over-running it, which makes them very deadly to their game; and, moreover, they care as little as any hounds I ever saw about the line being crossed, as, alas! it too often is here by horses. I consider them peculiarly adapted to the country which they hunt (as, indeed, they should be, having been carefully bred for the purpose more than a hundred years), which is quite an Alpine one, situated between Brighton, Newhaven, and Lewes, being, roughly speaking, bounded by the Lewes and Brighton road (although they do not go quite to the latter, as the Brighton harriers claim a little bit on that side) and the river Ouse. In fact, it comprises the narrow chain of high, steep hills which runs along by the side of the brooks, hence their name the Brookside, and which is only large enough to afford them two

days a week. A large proportion of it being old maiden turf, which carries a good scent, is all in their favour; but, on the other hand, the hares are very wild and strong, and a slow hound, no matter how good his nose, would inevitably be run out of scent before he could catch one. How the small beagle harrier would do here it is impossible to say, but my own impression is that he would not have power enough for the country. Apropos of this, a friend of mine, who was very intimately connected with the Brookside, went to see a pack of this description which had gained great celebrity in Wiltshire, and was shown as perfect a lot of about sixteen to seventeen inch harriers as could be seen. "Oh!" he remarked, "you call these harriers; that is what we hunt rabbits with in my country." I fancy, good as they may be, the little ones would tire on the hill-sides, steep as the roof of a house, and in the deep combs which intersect the Brookside country. On the other hand, I should say that Mr. Beard's hounds would prove very efficient in any situation. Their music is especially fine, and to hear their voices come ringing up from a comb, when they are below you, and very possibly out of sight, is one of the most charming things in my experience of hunting. There is a melodiousness in their note (not by any means so deep as that of the Southern hound or blue-mottled harrier) that is seldom heard in the present day. In this country, moreover, it is exceedingly useful, for where the hill-sides are steep you cannot always see them, and when there is a sudden turn, unless you could hear distinctly, it is possible that you may be riding away from instead of to them. Indeed, hounds without plenty of music would be very little use here. It is said, "Happy is the nation that has no history," and the maxim applies equally well to a hunting country, for it is an undoubted fact that the fewer the changes the greater chance of success. In this way the Brookside have been especially lucky, and all that can be said about them is comprised in a very few words. More than a hundred years ago they were kept and kennelled in the town of Lewes, but who was the master I have

never been able to learn; most probably two or three influential persons were connected with them.

Nothing definite is recorded until Mr. John Saxby, of North End, took the mastership many years ago, and the hounds were kennelled at Iford; but from that date they have always classed as one of the most celebrated, and perhaps I may say *the best-known* pack of harriers in England. I think also that no other pack has had the same number of characters well-known in the hunting world at its meets as might from that period have been seen with the Brookside. In Mr. John Saxby they fell into the hands of one of those sportsmen who, as a class, are unhappily fast dying out from amongst us—one who represented the small squire or sporting yeoman in the days when millionaires had not bought up and swamped all the small freeholds in large estates. A few such men are still to be found here and there, and perhaps nowhere more plentiful than in the old Saxon countries of Kent and Surrey. Devoted to field-sports, Mr. Saxby kept the pack up to the well-known standard, hunting them himself as judiciously as hounds could be hunted, breeding them with care, and finally, when age compelled him to quit the saddle, handing over one of the most perfect packs of harriers in existence to his successor, after having won the respect and esteem of all who hunted with him during the many years he held the mastership. A rather heavy weight, he was always well mounted, as he had need to be to keep anywhere near his hounds up and down these steep hills; and when I remember him first, some five and twenty years ago, no finer specimen of his class could have been seen. His ruddy complexion the picture of health, his white hair coming out beneath his broad-brimmed hat, his ample green frock coat and somewhat portly figure, as he rode up to the meet, surrounded by the beautiful pack in which he took such delight, formed altogether a picture worthy of being preserved on canvas by a Grant, Pearce, or Carter. What a patient man he was, and how little ruffled when we consider the unruly fields with which he was sur-

rounded, and how terribly at times his hounds were over-ridden! Wonderfully quaint also was he in manner, and caustic in remark, as was shown one day when he was allowing his pack to pick out a cold scent, inch by inch, up a valley. On a neighbouring hill, a man who had viewed the hare was shouting at the top of his voice, and gesticulating wildly with his hat in the air to attract attention. Taking not the slightest notice of these endeavours, Mr. Saxby was heard to say, apparently to himself, "Ah! sir, I should advise you to keep your hat on, or happen you may catch cold." Some few years ago Mr. Saxby felt himself no longer able to fulfil his duties, and I believe the hounds were then taken for a short time by Mr. John Verrall of Swanboro', near Lewes—as smart a man over a country as was ever seen; but, although still in the prime of life, he had inherited the fatal seeds of consumption, and was no longer fit for the arduous duties of hunting hounds, and often had to fall back on the services of Mr. J. Philcox, of Preston, who was then, and I hope I may say still is, most zealous in his endeavours to promote the welfare of both the Brookside harriers and the Southdown fox-hounds. However, there was a promising young one of the good old country stock coming on to take the horn, and after Mr. Charles Beard, who always had a share in the hounds, and Mr. Philcox had managed the country for a year or two subsequent to Mr. Verrall's decease, Mr. Steyning Beard, of Rottingdean, became master, built new kennels near his residence, and, with Jack Funnell, who had hunted them for a few years, and was, as they say, born in the Brookside kennels, to turn them, he has kept up the prestige of the pack and shown wonderfully good sport for the last few seasons.

In hunting his hounds Mr. Beard follows in the path pointed out by Mr. Saxby, and leaves them very much to themselves; in fact, a quieter man for a young one I never saw handle the horn, and I am sure he would have delighted even Beckford himself. At the same time he is most persevering, and never gives up a hare as lost while there is a chance of recovering her. He has,

moreover, the advantage of youth on his side, and, being a moderate weight and very fine horseman, let them run as hard as they like, he is always there or thereabouts to see what is going forward, and render assistance if it is needed. No man is better mounted, and when I was last in the country he was riding horses that would have done credit to the shires. Very large fields for harriers are generally to be found with the Brookside, and they would be much larger was not capping enforced here, as much for the protection of the farmers, over whose land they hunt, as for the sake of supporting the hounds. This gets rid of a large class who care nothing at all about sport, but like a ride, and would, when hounds were near, perhaps rather take it in their direction than any other. From such a place as Brighton these would not only be a great nuisance, but do an infinity of mischief to crops, besides spoiling sport, and a cap effectually stops them. During the month of October and early in November, many well-known sportsmen, who shine in other and more difficult countries, are to be seen with the Brookside, and altogether class (in a sporting sense) is generally better represented with them than with harriers generally. No man fond of hounds who visits Brighton should fail to have a look at them, for although the hills are at first a little puzzling to strangers, there are few things more enjoyable than a gallop over their sound old turf on a fine autumn morning, while to the man who loves hunting in all forms the sight of such a pack of hounds as he will there see cannot fail to give more than ordinary pleasure.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. BROOKS'S, OR THE BEX-HILL HARRIERS.

"The hounds of Taygetus, and ferocious echoes of Cithæron invite."

HAVING given a description of one uncommon pack of harriers, I will now endeavour to do the same with one of a totally different kind. The Bex-hill, or Mr. George Brooks's harriers, are as near the Southern hound, probably, as anything could be found. He has had them all his life, and they have been in the family for generations, hence he knows exactly how they are bred, and informed me that in the north, about Lancashire, there were still a few similar packs where he could get a change of blood; nevertheless, they were not quite pure-bred Southern hounds, though very nearly so. He also informed me that the blue mottle colour, although frequent in these hounds, was not invariably a mark of the breed, and, in fact, pointed out one of his most promising puppies who was entirely wanting in it, being of ordinary hound colour. Mr. Brooks hunts a very rough woodland, wild sort of country, in the immediate neighbourhood of Hastings—a bad country to ride over, for the land is heavy, the fields small, and the fences rough, while the coverts are far more plentiful than under ordinary circumstances one would care to see in a hare-hunting country; nevertheless, it suits the pack which hunt it admirably, and I doubt if it would be possible to show so much sport in it with any other description of hound. The Prince of Wales, when at Hastings a few years ago, hunted with them, and is said to have been very pleased with the sport shown by this remnant of what was formerly the

hound in general use in the Weald of Sussex. I cannot do better than quote a portion of an article I contributed on this pack to "Baily's Magazine" in 1876, when the remembrance of a capital day with them was yet fresh in my memory :—

"There, before the house, but on the other side of the road, are the pack. Let us just look them over and see the kind of hounds with which our ancestors were wont to

Awake the mountain Echo in her cell.

But, my friend, come with no sarcastic remarks anent necks, shoulders, straight legs, and so forth. Here, nose and voice are more thought of than beauty of proportion, and yet they are beautiful. Look at that old hound, the patriarch of the pack, and father of many of them as well; note his solemn head, eye like a blood-hound, and low set, long hanging ears set far back. Deep flewed is he, and throaty withal, but compact and full of bone; and the veriest tyro who ever looked a dog in the face must see at a glance that hunting is his mission, while his black-and-tan and blue-mottled coat bespeak the old Southern hound. Some amongst them are flat-sided and gaunt, others below the regulation standard, for they are not very level as regards height; but in one and all there is the deep-flewed head and drooping ear, soft and flexible as silk. In their midst stands the huntsman, proud of his pack as Frank Gillard at Belvoir, Alfred Thatcher at Brocklesby, or Tom Firr at Kirby Gate; albeit, instead of being mounted on a sixteen-hand thoroughbred, in the pink of condition, a pair of stout hobnailed boots have to carry him through the day. He is a thorough sportsman, nevertheless, and points out the favourites of his pack with as much gusto as Tom Firr would call Racer or Alfred into the show-yard at the Yorkshire tryst in August. Right well will he do his duty; and where the hare is killed, Jack will be there to see.

"But hold! here comes the Squire, on hospitable thoughts intent, to ask us to refresh the inner man; and so, leaving Jack

to a joke or two with, the rustics anent certain hares of prodigious proportions which have since harvest been fattening on their cabbages, we turn towards the fleshpots, not, however, before we learn from our new mentor that these are not quite pure old Southern hounds, though nearly so; that the blue mottled colour has little to do with the matter, as he once knew a gentleman who had a pack of pure-bred ones entirely white, and that he has a dog, newly come from the north, a badger-pied one, with a cross of the Sinnington in his combination, and, consequently, partly a fox-hound.

"This second inspection over, we join a real hard-working crew around the groaning board, and find such mighty ale being handed round, as Thomson must have had in his eye when he wrote,—

> Nor wanting is the brown October drawn,
> Mature and perfect, from his dark retreat
> Of thirty years,—

Ale such as lives alone, in memory of ancient days, and some few houses like unto this. Around the walls hang hunting prints from pictures, such as Sartorius sketched, and our ancestors delighted in; and over the wide-spread fireplace, guns which had served to thin stubble and covert, ages ere breech-loading and driving were thought of. But at length time is up, our genial host mounts a gelding of arching crest and massy frame that you could almost fancy had leapt bodily out of one of the pictures we have been looking at; and in his long green coat, broad-brimmed hat, and white tops, carries us in idea back at once a generation, if not more. His son is on a really good-looking chestnut; the fox-hunting element is represented by a couple of sons of a late well-known M.F.H. There are a dozen or so of others on steeds of all kinds and descriptions, and no end of 'foot-people,' as Dickey Boggledike would have called them; for be it known the whole village hunts to-day, save and except the parson, whom we see afterwards, spade in hand, getting a footpath across the glebe meadow into order,

and set him down at once as an enthusiastic, if mistaken, disciple of Ruskin.

"There is no long draw when once a move is made. A rushy meadow hard by puts them on the line of a hare, which some kind villager has just given a hint to move; and when the great twenty-three-inch harriers feel the line, there is such a burst of melody as never greeted our ears before. We have heard fox-hounds run hard in covert on a good scenting day; we have heard the chiding of the Devon and Somerset, when their stag was set up in the stream below, re-echoed from some deep combe; we have heard the tones of fifteen couple of blood-hounds, like the angry roar of the ocean, as they drove their deer through the shade of Vinny Ridge and Boldre Wood; but never did we hear such hound music as this—such a full volume of sound with such melody of tone. Then the swing; the way the great brutes went, lashing their sterns, all abreast, like the horses of the sun, and topped the first fence. Say what you like of slow coaches, it was a sight to see; and so thought all who were there, for neither bank or quickset stopped the infantry division, and they were hard on the track of Jack, as, having charged a big place and gained a good elevation, he waved his hat and shouted, 'Gone away!' So far they had the best of it, for the country was scarcely calculated for cavalry manœuvres; but now, by the help of a friendly lane, they made play, and being down wind, there was no fear of losing the pack, as they rattled their hare all alone through a wood beyond the village, when the words of Somerville came back to us with a force never before remembered:—

> Hark! from yon covert where those towering oaks
> Above the humble copse aspiring rise,
> What glorious triumphs burst in every gale
> Upon our ravish'd ears!

Then they brought her round, and we could see with what precision and fidelity they traversed every 'work' she made,

and rung her knell at every footstep. The issue was not long doubtful. A high piece of rape sheltered her for a few moments, and then, at the end of forty minutes, they ran into her in the open, after a magnificent piece of hunting.

"Killing not far from the scene of the fixture, the Squire thought that, after the exertions all had undergone, a little more in the refreshment line would do no harm, and right willing listeners he found to the reasons set forth for again doing justice to his good things. However, eating and drinking can't last for ever, even with the best of cheer, and on this occasion, though all were glad of a refresher, they were anxious to be at work again. A move was made to the rough meadow in which the first hare was found, and, ere many minutes, the pack were discoursing sweet music on the line of another, who also appeared inclined to run the village. Those sort of shifts, however, which would make sad havoc with less tender-nosed hounds, have very little effect on these, who, we believe, would run their game up Ludgate-hill or Fleet-street at high noon, were they required to do so. And now, hunting the line inch by inch, they forced her from the village gardens into the open, taking a wide ring over as stiff a bit of country as ever we saw, a very respectable brook being included amongst its numerous beauties. It was a beautiful sight to see the pack sail away all alone, though a gentleman who, we fancied, came from somewhere Windsor way, was loud in his censure of the cavalry division for not 'riding up to the hounds,' as he called it; but then, it must be remembered, he was sitting on a gate instead of a horse, which at times makes all the difference in the estimation one forms of the practicability of a country. Had he been mounted on a living steed, perchance he might have taken a different view of the matter. During this ring it became evident that the badger-pied hound with the Sinnington blood, though in voice and everything save colour he matched the rest, was too fast for them, and, moreover, inclined to be very jealous and skirt, so that we expect ere this he is drafted, unless, being

a good-nosed hound, he is kept for the sake of a cross. Swinging round, they soon brought their hare once more back to the village; and it was a real treat to see the way they came over a gate in their line, all in a body like steeplechase horses at the first fence. We then had some very beautiful slow hunting through a nursery garden, across the playground of the National School, where even hard gravel and a multitude of children could not choke the pack off the line. Here there was difficulty in getting the gates (too high to be jumped) open to let the hounds through, and this delay gave the hare a bit more law, of which she took good care to avail herself. So far, those who rode 'Shanks's mare' had the best of it; but from this point the tables were turned, and, stretching right away, she led them, straight as a crow could fly, through the covert traversed by the first hare, and out on the other side; neither did she turn her head when the open country was reached, but, holding on like a fox, made over two or three miles of open to another large covert, thus, of course, leaving the infantry far in the rear.

"Thanks, however, to the superb voices of these hounds, even if out of sight, they were by no means out of hearing; and though at times they could not have been less than a couple of miles from them, they could note, by ear, every turn as they worked out her twists and foils (for when we say that the hare went straight away, it must not be supposed she so far forgot her nature as to run a straight line without making work, but that she never came round or turned back, as hares generally do).

"The next covert being reached gave the runners another chance to get up, and every one fancied they would change in it; but no, they stuck to the line, and having taken their hare in at one side, forced her out on the other, and away again in the open, soon leaving the ploughed land for meadows and marshes. Here the first and only check was caused by a fresh hare jumping up close before them and taking them from the line; this mistake was, however, soon rectified, and they once

more settled down to hunt with a will; before them was a broad and deep river, and across it they went straight for another small covert, where we were in fear of changing again; but no, she was driven out of her country, and knew it not; or, if she did, was, perhaps, too tired and hard run to enter, and running up the outside, reaches the hill beyond where as Shakespeare has it,—

> By this poor Watt, far off upon a hill,
> Stands on his hinder legs with listening ear,
> To hearken if his foes pursue him still;
> Anon! their loud alarums he doth hear,
> And now his grief may be compared well
> To one sore sick that hears the passing bell.

Verily, our quarry had no difficulty in hearing the loud alarums of her foes, and they must, indeed, have sounded ominous as the passing bell to a sick man, for they were rung out now with a depth of tone and persistence in the music that portended a speedy death.

"In vain, having reached the length of her strength and tether, she now turns short and doubles back; like the Squire's pack in the celebrated 'Quarterly Review' run, they turn shorter than she does. In vain she runs the road, the deep-toned hounds seem glued to her footsteps; nor does a cur dog, having chased her, check them for one single moment—on they go, ringing her knell, and, as Dick Burton said, 'preaching her funeral sermon' at the same time. One other chance to shake them off remains, and she embraces it; there runs the railway with its arid gravel line, and beyond it rolls the sea, girt with cold and pebbly shingle. If they can hunt her there, the last chance for life is gone. Over the railroad she goes, and runs the beach beyond, though she dares not trust herself on the waste of waters, as some hares have been known to do when hard pressed in this country.

"Do these manœuvres shake off her pursuers or gain her any respite? Not one moment. Alike to them seems verdant

lawn or arid shingle; yard by yard they gain upon her now, their long lopping stride is like that of fate. They catch a view, once more she crosses the line, down the bank they roll, hounds and hare together, to the green sward beneath, and the next moment Jack, who has run the whole chase, with a mighty 'who-whoop' that would have done credit to the lungs of a Stentor, holds her up dead and stiff.

"'One hour and three quarters,' says the master, looking at his watch, 'and the hounds have never been cast, save when stopped from the fresh hare, and no check has occurred.'

"'That's what I call real hunting,' remarked a man who appeared delighted with the sport, 'for the hounds hunted her out every inch themselves—no holloaing or lifting.'

"The master decides that enough has been done for the day; though, as we take the road home with Jack and his favourites, they seem, by their manner and action, to say that they could tackle another yet, and totally alter the opinion we had formed at first sight, that a long, hard day would be likely to tire them. There they are, blue mottles, black and tans, and black, white, and tan, one and all apparently as fresh as when they left their kennel in the morning; and Jack, in the absence of a whip, is much exercised in mind, as we cross the fields, lest they should get wide from him and put up a fresh hare—a thing which more than one of them seem bent on doing—and not only the young ones, but the elders even, are continually being called to order.

"At length the station is reached, and, amidst hearty good wishes from one and all to the stranger, and congratulations that the day's sport has turned out so good, we step into the train and start for home, after one of the most enjoyable days we ever had with hounds."

It is some time now since the foregoing was written, yet I often look back on that day, with all its (to me) novel features; and I must say that for the time I seemed to be living in a world which knew not the days of express trains and electric

telegraphs, not to mention telephones and other wonderful inventions of recent date. No doubt there I saw hare-hunting but little altered from what it was centuries ago, in all the more wooded and enclosed parts of England; and, truly, I must say that our ancestors were not much to be pitied concerning the sport they had. On the contrary, I am sure that, to any man really fond of hounds, such a day would prove as great a treat as it did to me. There was something so genuine about it. No show, no parade, but withal such a genuine appreciation of the sport from the squire down to the village cobbler, for I believe I was indebted to that worthy son of St. Crispin for the sundry short cuts and welcome nicks, which enabled me to see so much. At any rate, whoever my guide may have been, he proved a trustworthy one; and although he beyond all doubt earned his bread by the sweat of his brow, I am sure he was as genuine a sportsman as ever followed hound, and from his knowledge of country and the run of the game, I believe he would, if born in other circumstances, have been a very queer customer to shake off in any country. I honour a true sportsman anywhere, and under any circumstances, and fortunate as it proved for me that I chanced to fall in with him. I wish fortune had placed him where he might have had the chance to handle the horn himself either with fox-hounds or harriers.

The huntsman, whip, or whatever he is called—by the way, I believe his name is Joe, and not Jack—is a great character and real good runner, though an elderly man. I only hope that circumstances may yet again enable me to have a day over this classic ground (for we killed where the Conqueror is supposed to have landed), while all I met on that occasion are in the land of the living. That the old-fashioned hounds will ever be replaced by another kind, while a Brooks holds Bex-hill, I cannot believe. Long may they flourish to remind us what hunting was like when men wore long wigs and rode on demi-pique saddles.

CHAPTER XXX.

OTTER-HUNTING.

One labour yet remains, celestial maid,
Another element demands thy song.
No more o'er craggy steeps, thro' coverts thick
With pointed thorn, and briers intricate,
Urge on with horn and voice the painful pack,
But skim with wanton wing th' irriguous vale,
Where winding streams amid the flow'ry meads
Perpetual glide along.

THE chase of the otter is totally different from any I have yet treated of, and, although he seems to have been held in more estimation by our forefathers than has been the case, say, within the present century—he was looked on as a beast of "stinking chase" as opposed to beasts of "sweet chase," such as the stag and buck—they appear to have had a considerable degree of pleasure in hunting him. It is not, perhaps, to be wondered at that quaint old Isaac Walton, keen fisherman that he was, should have chosen the otter as the chase to be brought in juxtaposition to his own beloved sport, for it is only fair to surmise that there was little love lost between the good old man and the river thief. By the way, if Isaac had only been a hunting man, what a glorious description would he not have given us of the chase of those days! As it is, setting aside the enmity he must have borne to otters, and the time of year at which they are hunted, coming, as we may say, pat to his purpose, to bring about the celebrated dialogue, it is very certain that otter-hunting must, in his day, have been held in

some consideration, or he would never have made Venator about to attend a meet for his destruction. That our forefathers enjoyed chasing him is evident, and, reading between the lines, it is perhaps as easy to account for the sport having gone out of fashion. One great cause was, no doubt, that, with increased civilization, rivers and brooks were laid open to the rod, which, when forest abounded, could scarcely have been fished save by netting or wiring; and, consequently, more men took to the gentle craft for mere sport's sake, and demanded the otter's destruction by any and every means they could command. The same cause introduced a change in the style of riding to hounds, and the kinds of chase which were not calculated to bring forth the powers of the horse and the courage of the rider were gradually less esteemed than heretofore. From this reason we came to care less about the hound-music, which in old days was set so much store by, and, instead of men asking whether a hound's voice was a bass or a counter-tenor, the first question became, Can he go the pace? These gradual changes have sent otter-hunting out of fashion, and for many years the sport was almost dead; even now the only pack of otter-hounds in the United Kingdom, whose fixtures are published, is the Carlisle. Still the sport has been kept alive by a few earnest votaries of the chase, who could never bear to lay by the horn, winter or summer—such, for instance, as the Rev. John Russell, who, it is said, walked at least three thousand miles, when he was a curate, before he found a single otter, and then, having got hold of a hound called Racer, who would hit on the drag, ran up his score of kills with a rapidity that must have gone far to erase his previous disappointment. The Hon. Geoffrey, now Lord Hill, has, or at any rate had, a very capital pack of hounds, with which he hunted in Wales and the neighbouring counties, and has even come as far as Oxford, where, one spring, not many years ago, he had very fair sport indeed. Moreover, he has been to Ireland with his hounds; Wales, Devonshire, where they have never been without otters, or hounds to hunt them, and the Border

counties have been the principal scene of operations for many years; but I am glad to say that a taste for the sport appears to be spreading, as there is no doubt that with otter-hounds you see a lot of real hunting; and any man of ordinary observation must learn something from having a turn with them. That the sport should once more become popular is easy to comprehend. One of the prominent features of the age is the immense attention given to athletic exercises of all kinds; and where one man could have stood a day's running after hounds a few years ago, at least twenty could do so now. The old love of hunting is still implanted in our nature, and where a real hound can be seen using his nose in pursuit of game, I believe a paper chase would have but little attraction. Here otter-hunting is calculated to come in, and fill a very obvious want. I do not say that horses are never used in the sport, but it often takes place in localities where it is far more convenient for a good pedestrian to walk than ride, hence it forms a capital summer recreation to men who have but little chance of ever bestriding a three hundred guinea flier across the grass, and I should be inclined to back him to see more of the fun on "Shanks's mare" than with the best hunter in England between his knees, though, after having heard of an old gentleman whose custom it was to fish the River Barle for some miles above and below Dulverton from the back of his pony, it is difficult to say what might not be done on horseback even in otter-hunting. However, one recommendation of it is that, for the enjoyment, a man wants only an intense love of hounds and hunting, an utter contempt for getting wet, and a good stout pair of legs and feet, that enable him to hold his own in a long day's march. A gentleman I met in Wales a year or two ago told me that, the day before, he had walked thirty miles with the present Lord Hill's otter-hounds. There is no corn-merchant's bill or lame horses hanging to it, so that, if a man lives in a suitable neighbourhood for the sport, and there is a pack to hunt it, he must be poor indeed if he cannot indulge

his taste occasionally. A great advantage is that, when every other kind of chase is closed against you, the otter can be hunted; and how charming must be the thought to a man, pent for months in some dark, dreary office, of spending the early hours of a hot summer morning in June, July, or August, by the side of the cool stream! In fact, like stag-hunting, the beautiful scenes, into which the sport is almost sure to lead you, constitute a large portion of its charm. Then the music of the great rough hounds, often re-echoed by rocky glens, comes like the peal of an organ in the ear, and he must be very devoid of all sense of the beautiful who could hear and see unmoved all that takes place during the course of an otter-hunt. Let a man go out ever so determined not to risk injury to his constitution by getting wet, I think it is more than even betting that he finds himself taking water as keenly as any one ere a tough old dog-otter is brought to hand. Of course it is hard work, I may say almost laborious, for those who go thoroughly into the thing, but not more so than many other English sports.

Formerly, it seems that very unfair advantages were taken of the otter, such as confining him with nets to a certain portion of the river, and sticking him with spears if the chance occurred; but I believe these tactics are little resorted to in the present day, unless under peculiar circumstances; and with the best packs it is usual to hunt him fairly down, and give him a chance to save his life if he can, of which chance he often makes the most, for he is cunning as well as strong; and it must be remembered that a great part of the chase takes place in an element which is natural to him, but not to the hounds, and this of course gives him material advantages. I am sorry to say that even now this animal is held in very bad repute with river owners and fishermen, on account of the alleged amount of fish he destroys, as they say he has a nasty habit of only biting away a choice piece from the shoulders, and then leaving the rest, going in for another capture. There may be some truth in this, but, on the other hand, I have heard from disinterested

parties that the otter is not nearly so destructive as he has been represented to be; and it has been asserted that he could be kept in reasonable numbers, enough to show sport, without any very great detriment to the angler's prospects. Except in a few places, however, he has a bad time of it, when known to be about, for traps, guns, and all kinds of engines of destruction are brought to bear against him, though, I am pleased to say, often unsuccessfully. It would be a much more sportsmanlike way of getting rid of him to invite a master of otter-hounds to bring his pack, and destroy him in a legitimate manner, when he is known to frequent a certain neighbourhood. Oftentimes it is attempted to get up an impromptu hunt with terriers, curs, and any dogs that can be brought together, but it is generally unsuccessful; because it is a fact (although little known) that there is great difficulty at first in inducing even hounds to acknowledge the scent of an otter, though they are fond enough of it when regularly entered. I once saw the experiment tried with a pack of hounds that had never hunted otter, and, although we could see his "seal" on the mud, and found fish half eaten left in his overnight's ramble, not a hound touched the scent; and we might as well have been hunting for an elephant, as far as they were concerned. Nay, I am almost convinced that a terrier actually bolted an otter from a hole in the river bank, though I could not clearly see. At any rate, there was such a wave as no fish likely to have been in that water could have made; but if it was an otter, the hounds passed over his line with a sublime indifference that would have done credit to the cast of Vere de Vere. Yet these hounds were in the habit of hunting more than one kind of game, and, in fact, had for years shown very good all-round sport. Some labourers viewed an otter by the river shortly after we had unsuccessfully tried it. I should certainly like, for reasons I expressed when writing of hare-hunting, to see the chase of the otter much more general than it is. The passion for the chase is so strong in all Englishmen that to give it a legitimate vent is a national benefit.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE OTTER-HOUND.

The deep-flew'd hound
Breed up with care, strong, heavy, slow, but sure;
Whose ears, down-hanging from his thick, round head,
Shall sweep the morning dew, whose clanging voice
Awake the mountain Echo in her cell,
And shake the forests.

I NOW come to one of the least known, though certainly one of the most interesting of our breeds of hounds, for, except in a few localities, the true otter-hound is seldom seen. In appearance he differs from all the rest of the hound tribe, as they, except the old Welsh harrier, are smooth, while he is very decidedly a rough hound, and, when seen in perfection, a very beautiful animal he is. Whether the present breed is a pure one, I shall not attempt to determine, not having any reliable data to go upon; though I may say that on the Continent there are pure breeds of hounds still extant which very nearly resemble him, and I think there is great probability that he is identical with them. On the other hand, I think it very conceivable that he may have had a cross of the water spaniel to enable him to bear long-continued immersion, and, in some specimens I have seen, the coat would lead me to come to such a conclusion. In that case I think the wire-haired harrier must have been the foundation of the breed; and he shows a great many of the characteristics of that race, more especially of what are known as the red hounds. He is a very powerful dog, standing from twenty-two to twenty-four inches in height, has beautiful long hanging ears, and a

voice like an old Southern hound himself; his coat is rough—nay, it may almost be described as shaggy; and he is found of most of the regular hound colours—black and tan, black, tan and white, hare tan, &c.; though, of course, the tints do not show up so brilliantly as on the smooth-coated varieties. His nose is exceedingly good, as it has need to be, when he is expected to drag up to the hover of his game, perhaps some hours after the otter himself has passed over the ground. No dog living shows greater courage, not even the bull-dog; indeed, without this he would be of no use to grapple with his deadly foe in his own element; and so desperate is the struggle, that he has been known to be carried to the bottom and literally drowned.

Many people have used fox-hounds in the chase of the otter, and, when well entered, no doubt they are very efficient, as they are in hunting anything; but I cannot help thinking, from the nature of their coats, that the time spent in the water must be very injurious to them; neither do I think that that style of hunting is calculated to bring out all the beauties of this chase. Others use all kinds of mongrels and nondescripts—in fact, pretty much what they can catch. There are, however, a few packs in England that have been kept perfectly pure, and of these the best known are the Carlisle otter-hounds; Lord Hill has, or had a year or two ago, a very beautiful pack, I saw but very little of them, but from that little I came to the conclusion that they were more like the wire-haired harrier, in character and colour and appearance, than any of those I had seen from the north of England. They were not so dark in colour, and shorter in their coats; indeed, more broken than long haired. I was very unfortunate in never having seen this pack at work, as on two different occasions I chanced to arrive in their vicinity just as they had finished hunting the district—a great disappointment to me, as I should much have liked a day with them.

The otter-hound should have one characteristic in common

with the stag-hound, which is that, when hunting the water, no stem, twig, or overhanging bough, with which there is a chance of the game having come in contact, should escape his notice; and he should be able even to carry the scent actually in the water; and very beautiful it is to hear them throwing their tongues as they swim in the wake of their amphibious prey; and as Somerville has it,—

> And joy redoubled bursts from every mouth.

It is usual to take out a rather strong contingent of terriers, with otter-hounds, for the purpose of going into the "hover," where the pack, from their size, often could not follow; and when an otter has made his "couch" in some strong place, under the roots of a tree, or in the recesses of a rocky cavern, it takes very forcible arguments indeed to induce him to throw up the advantages of such a position. These same arguments it is the terrier's duty to apply, and a very unpleasant one it must often prove; for no animal in existence will bite harder or fight more manfully for his life than the otter; hence the terriers used must be of the very hardest and best. In the north, I believe, Dandy Dinmonts are generally selected, not only on account of their gameness, but from their coat enabling them to stand the water better than smooth terriers could do; while, at the same time, they match the pack both in colour and roughness, and look as much at home with their deep-toned friends as a fox-terrier does on the kennel benches of the Belvoir or Quorn.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE DRAG.

Hark! on the drag I hear their tuneful notes.

THE Druid wrote a chapter on "Stag, Flag, and Drag," and a very interesting one it proved. I can scarcely hope the same for mine, yet I trust I shall be forgiven devoting one to a chase that every season affords a great deal of amusement to officers and others so tied for time, that perhaps they could scarcely procure it in any other way. Hunting a drag cannot be called sport, and I never met with any one who dignified it by the title; but it may be very good fun for those to whom the real pleasure of the chase consists solely in galloping and jumping. Personally I would quite as soon ride after a drag well managed as a deer turned from a cart; there is just as much sport in one as the other, and there is a sort of manly independence about those who go out ostensibly after aniseed and red herrings, which is wanting in the turned-out deer-hunt. They don't "make believe" at being sportsmen, but candidly and openly show that their object is not hunting but riding, and they take the readiest means to obtain the greatest amount of it in the shortest time. "Let them ride a steeplechase," some one may say; but I must remind him of a proposal to make a race across country between three very celebrated huntsmen, when one, at least, of the trio averred that "he could not ride a yard without music!" The same thing may influence not only many of those who hunt with drag-hounds, but their horses also, for it is by no means every animal that will go and fence kindly without the excitement of hounds, though with some

even to have seen them so rouses their spirits and temper that they are ready for anything during the rest of the day. I remember an instance of this once in a young horse of my own. I had bought him from Ireland, and a very grand hunter he was, but without hounds I have seen many donkeys that would have made pleasanter mounts, as, although not exactly restive, he was of such a sullen, sluggish temperament, that to get him along was harder work than thrashing before the invention of machines, and it was only by the nicest handling that it was accomplished, for as to "whacking" it out of him, the champion of England, with a cartload of ash-plants at hand, could not have done it, and spurs were no more efficacious. I had ridden him one day to meet the late Mr. Nevill's stag-hounds, but the deer took refuge on the bank of a cutting where a railroad was in progress of construction, and refused to run, so in reality our sport came to nothing, and I started homeward with a neighbour who had some very fair steeplechasers, and at the time happened to be riding a horse which had just previously run a close race with Hall Court, second in the same year, if I mistake not, to Alcibiade for the Liverpool. Whether my neighbour's horse beat him a head, or was beaten a head by him, I cannot now remember, but it was as near as that, so he must have been in very fair form. As we had an open country before us, large fields, and light fences, we put our horses into a gallop, and after a little time—why or how I can scarcely tell—got to such a pace that it assumed the form of "a good Yorkshire gallop." I could see that my neighbour was going pretty nearly as well as he could, without actually calling on his horse, and I knew that I did not dare to call on mine, or I should very probably have caused him to put his ears back and stick his toes into the ground at once. As it was, I had to watch lest he savaged the other horse—*à la* Skirmisher in his two-year-old days—and by never asking him to gallop, we kept sailing along, I about a neck in the rear, but going quite at ease—how much faster I could have gone will never be

known—stride for stride with my friend, and flying the little fences as we came to them for three or four miles, until a road, or some obstacle of that sort, compelled us to pull up. "I think that horse of yours gallops," remarked my neighbour; "why don't you enter and run him at ——?" "Because I don't think he would try a yard unless he had been with hounds on that day," I replied. However, we had some further conversation, and the consequence was he agreed to give me another gallop, and see what could be done. It came off, he riding a horse not nearly so fast as the opponent of Hall Court, on which he went right away from me from the start, and at the end of a short distance my nag stuck his toes in, and refused to gallop another yard. Not long afterwards, chance brought us together with Mr. Joseph Anderson's stag-hounds; we both went on the wrong side of a small covert, lost our places, and sat down to regain them, and once more I could go as fast as he could.

This will serve to show that a drag may at times be desirable where a steeplechase would not. A great advantage in hunting a drag is that you can go just where you like, and if the owners and occupiers of land are conciliated and give their consent, there is not the slightest need that it should occasion any heart-burning or ill-will. This is a very easy matter in most instances, where a little tact is used, and, if there is a queer customer in the neighbourhood, his boundaries can be avoided, and no harm is done. Get a good man to run the drag; don't make the scent too strong—as I have sometimes seen done; lock all the gates in the line, and then you may ride to your heart's content, without doing harm to any one but your horse or yourself. Should you happen to cripple a hound, put him out of his misery at once; the chance is that he is worth nothing, or he would not be there. It may appear strange, but I have known men so clever in running a drag that the majority of the field—men who took no particular notice of what was going forward—would never know but a fox or hare was before them. Still I am bound to admit that such men are rare. I

have somewhere read of a master of hounds whose sport was so bad that he announced his intention of resigning the post at the end of the season. To his astonishment, a succession of particularly good runs set in, and he had no more complaint to make, and it was a long time ere he found out that some clever members of his field, not wishing him to resign, had contrived for his benefit a lot of drags from favourite coverts. I need not add he was not a Musters or an Anstruther Thomson, or such a trick would never have been attempted, and, if it had, would undoubtedly have failed. In my younger days I have seen some very good fun with the drag, and remember once a meet of harriers where one was started with the consent of the master, though the field knew nothing about it, in which they had such a rattler that several exclaimed, "We must have changed on to a fox;" and were only reassured by seeing a hare devoured by the hounds at the finish, for the thing was really well done.

Provided land could be found to ride over—and there are very few countries where it could not, I fancy—it would be a capital thing to establish packs of drag-hounds, and I am sure many masters of fox-hounds would heartily encourage the idea, if it tended to draw away from them a host of people who neither know nor care anything about hounds, but simply come out to ride against each other. To hear the conversation of a lot of the Young England school after eight or nine o'clock, you would imagine that a man's whole business in life from November to March was to jump. You may sit down where they congregate and hear how A—— jumped this, B—— shirked that, C—— fell here, and I got safe over there, but never a word escapes their lips relative to what the hounds have done; and I very much doubt if one in ten of this school know whether they ran up wind or down, whether they had a dog or bitch pack out, or, for the matter of that, whether they were ever really on a line or not, and I am sure, so that they could only go fast enough, they cared less. This is totally ignored by a large number that come out, and if they could be persuaded to

ride a drag, instead of hunting with fox-hounds, I am sure they would be better pleased at the end of the day than with the most perfect piece of hunting and chasing ever seen, and I am certain those who enjoy the work of hounds would be equally pleased at being relieved of their presence. Mind, I by no means include all men who ride hard in this category, for some of the best men over a country are, as they ought to be, the best judges of hounds' work; but then, as old George Beers said, they know "when not to ride" as well as when to go along, and, as a rule, anticipate a check and pull up soon enough to give hounds room, instead of driving them over the scent, or would do so if they could without the fear of being knocked over by one of those gentlemen who think of nothing but their own and their horses' performance. I don't know much about the drag at Oxford in the present day, but formerly it was a great feature, and justly termed the best institution for spoiling a sportsman and making a horseman that could possibly have been invented. Where there is a garrison, also, there is pretty sure to be a drag-hunt established, and a great boon it is to a lot of young men, fond of riding hard, who want a *certain gallop* without the restraints that the regular chase either does or ought to impose on them.

It may surprise some who have not searched old works on hunting to find that the drag is by no means a modern invention, but, under the name of a "train-scent," or "catt" was very freely indulged in by our ancestors as early as the days of Gervase Markham; and, in fact, that matching their horses across country—not in steeplechases (though it amounted to very much the same thing), as we do, but to run so many train-scents—was a very favourite amusement with them, and fast hounds were kept specially to run them. In one part of his work he cautions his readers to be sure of the speed of their hounds before venturing to make a match, lest, having tried their horse with inferior ones, they may be led into error and and themselves beaten, when they get into the company of some that are fast, and horses that can go with them. From this I

think we can show pretty clearly that in his day they must have had hounds nearly, if not quite, as fast as fox-hounds are now, in this way. Take the Arab as the standard, and let us, for argument's sake, suppose that he is as good now as he was in those days, though many affect to think that he has deteriorated. We find that against our thoroughbred horses he has no chance, even when running at an advantage of weight; but, at the same time, I think all will admit that he would gallop away from ordinary horses. In fact, we have it recorded that one of Mr. Childe's, of Kinlet Hall, best hunters was an Arab called Skim, and he was the quickest man of his day over Leicestershire; so that amongst *hunters*, and many rode full-bred ones even then, he must have been fast. Admitting, then, that the Arab is useless amongst our race-horses of any class now, let us go back and see what was the state of the case in the reign of James the First. We know that he gave 500*l.* for an Arab, but he was thought little of, and the breed fell into disrepute, *because he was easily beaten at Newmarket.* Five hundred pounds was a very large sum in those days, and would not have been given by the canny Scotchman unless the horse had a pretty good reputation; so I think we should err very little in assuming that he was equal to Monarch, who ran against the Hero for the Goodwood Cup. Now, although Monarch was beaten easily when receiving a lot of weight, he was in the very best company in England. On this showing, the Newmarket nags must have gone a very fair pace to beat a picked Arab easily in those early days, and then, as I shall show from Gervase Markham, horses were used indiscriminately for hunting matches and races on the course, in very much the same way that we see them timber-topping one week and flat-racing the next now. Let us see what he says on the subject:—

"The true English horse—him, I mean, that is bred under a good clime, on firm ground, in a pure temperature—is of tall stature and large proportions; his head, though not so fine as either the Barbaries' or the Turkes', yet is lean, long, and well-

fashioned; his crest is hie, only subject to thickness if he be stoned, but, if he be gelded, then it is firm and strong. His chyne is straight and broad, and all his limbs large, leane, flat, and excellently jointed. For endurance, I have seen them suffer and execute as much and more than I ever noted of any foraine creation. I have heard it reported that at the massacre of Paris (St. Bartholomew) Montgomerie, taking an English mare in the night, first swam her over the river Seine, and after ran her so many leagues as I fear to nominate, lest misconstruction might tax me of too lavish a report.

"Again, for swiftness, what nation hath brought forth the horse which hath exceeded the English? When the best Barbaries, that were in their prime, I saw them overrun by a black Hobbie at Salisbury. Yet that Hobbie was more overrune by a horse called Valentine, which Valentine, neither in *hunting* or *running*, was ever equalled; yet was a plain-bred English horse both by sire and dam."

Here we see two things: first, that the same horses were then used in hunting, or, at any rate, trail-scents and in racing; and, secondly, that the English horses could then beat the Eastern ones apparently as easy as they do now. The East changea but little. I see no cause to believe that the Arab is either better or worse than he was three hundred years ago; probably the best never left the desert then, or ever have done so since, but those that did come to England we as easily disposed of then as now. The horses that beat them must have had such a turn of speed as would do the same now, and that speed no hound could lead a four-mile train-scent, unless he was equal to the pace fox-hounds can run at the present day; neither would any other hound have stood the bustling, should the horses a little overpace him.

I will give another instance. Let us take the match run off in Egypt some years ago, and won by a mare called Fair Nell, formerly the property of Mr. Edmund Tattersall, of Irish extraction and unreliable pedigree, but supposed to be thoroughbred, there or

thereabouts; she beat the Arabs easily on their own ground, but I never heard that she was supposed to be worth training in England; yet would any hounds but fox-hounds, good as we have them now, have kept out of her way in a drag. I don't think it would be going too far to take her as a fair type of the horses that made such short work of Barbs, Turks, and Arabs, in old days, and if so, they must have possessed hounds of great speed; whether they ever used them in actual chase I don't pretend to say, but they must have had them, and thence came the fox-hound. It is well to remember that, until a later era than this, all agricultural work was done by oxen; there was no cart blood about as there is now. The indigenous horse, the ponies of Wales, the forests, &c., and the pack-horse, who carried burdens later on (probably a selection by sire and dam of the biggest of these), were all active, hardy beasts. No doubt the first infusion of Eastern blood came in with the Phœnicians; the Normans also brought some Eastern blood here through Spain, into which it had come with the Moors, and thence to France with Charlemagne. We know that a Spanish stallion, derived probably from the big Nubian or Dongola horses was imported by Roger de Belesme (created Earl of Salisbury by William the Conqueror) to his seat at Ponisland, in Wales, and that the horses of that district were noted for their excellence until the days of Michael Drayton; and very shortly came the Crusades, which must have opened up a stream of Eastern blood, of which no record was ever kept, except when an Arab, or one so-called, came into the hands of a king or a churchman—a thing not to be wondered at when noblemen could not even write their names—but noticing the fact that some very good Eastern sires probably came into the land during the Roman occupation, for they took the best of everything with them from all countries, and men who would take English hounds to Rome would bring Eastern horses to England for their use, there is a very fair foundation for a really good and speedy race of horses, bred no doubt more for action

and endurance than galloping, and developed by climate and selection into a horse instead of a pony. Another strong dash of Eastern blood reduced the size, but gave us those little wonders that, like their desert ancestors, could gallop all day and half the next, which Admiral Rous dubbed butchers' hacks; yet by the time of Eclipse the native blood and climate had re-asserted itself, and we find horses sixteen hands and upwards, but we have endeavoured of late years to breed for speed alone, and, if we got that, disregarded all else. However, I am off the line and must get back; that there were brave men before Agamemnon, and good horses in England long ere the importation of the Royal mares, I am convinced from old records; and through the simple fact of our ancestors having hunted the drag, and raced with these same animals, by analogy, or as we should put it in turf phraseology, "a collateral trail," I arrive at the conclusion that hounds which can race into a good fox in five and twenty minutes, given a suitable country, are by no means a modern invention, but were an institution in England two or three centuries ago. Now my task is done, and I lay down my pen, hoping that the reader who has followed me thus far may have derived some amusement and a new idea or two regarding hounds and hunting. That my work is perfect I do not expect, but I hope at least to have thrown light on some obscure points, and to have avoided the errors of some who have in recent times been accepted as shining lights on the subject of the chase.

If I have induced one man to take more interest in the work of hounds, to notice the different tactics of the various kinds of game hunted, and think for himself what kind of hound is best calculated to give them full play and finally hunt the quarry down and defeat it, I am sure I shall have opened up to him a new source of pleasure, and shall not have written in vain. If, on the other hand, a few enthusiasts in the chase shall only find half as much pleasure in reading as I have in writing, what has been to me really a labour of love, I shall be amply repaid.

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